WHITSUNTIDE HOLIDAY NUMBER.

S.S. PEARSON'S 100,000 PRIZES COUPON. S.S.
May 20th, 1899.
S.S. No. 2. S.S.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

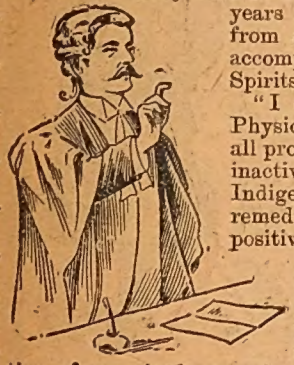
No. 542. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 20TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

"£185 in Doctor's Bills."

(Read the Statement.)

Mr. J. Clarkson makes the following interesting Statement:

"I am anxious you should publish my case on account of the obstinacy and severity of the Symptoms. For years I had been suffering fearfully from an inactive, sluggish Liver, accompanied by Dyspepsia and Low Spirits.



"I consulted some of the best Physicians in England, and, although all pronounced it the same, a 'torpid, inactive Liver, accompanied by Indigestion,' their treatment and remedies were alike unavailing; I positively spent £185 in Doctors' bills. You, sirs, may not know the misery of taking bottle after bottle of Doctors' physic, without the slightest relief from pain, or amelioration of one single symptom. I am thankful to state, however, that I was completely cured by taking your wonderful Guy's Tonic.

"I saw an advertisement of yours stating 'Improvement follows the first dose.' This I can say was truthfully so in my case; I had not taken the first dose of Guy's Tonic ten minutes before I felt its beneficial influence on the Liver and Digestive Organs. The distressing Despondency and Nervousness disappeared as if by magic; the dull, aching pain between the Shoulders, constant Headache, tenderness about the Liver, flushing of the Face after meals, Drowsiness, Giddiness, Flatulency, and the other Symptoms have not returned, and it is now eighteen months since my restoration took place."

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10/6

Design No. 97.—Half a Guinea.—Design No. 97 is the smart and fashionable **Chesterfield** Coat and Skirt. It consists of a tailor-made single-breasted coat, with velvet collar, and full, well-made skirt. This smart Costume is made in the smooth-faced **Venetian Cloth** or in the famous **Specialite Serge** for **Half a Guinea** Costume complete. Carriage paid, 6d. extra. The Skirt alone can be had at **5/6**; carriage, 5d. Colours in either cloth are: Black, Navy, Electric, Blue-Grey, Myrtle, Brown, Fawn, Bronze-Green, Moss, Dark Grey, Purple. When ordering, please give measurement round bust (under arms), length of sleeve inside, size of waist, and length of Skirt in front.

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COLOURS of all Costumes are Black, Navy, Brown, Myrtle, Fawn, Grey, Royal Blue, Crimson, and Resada.

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By E. MILLS.

I.—HIS "ESPECIAL FEAR."

I.

RUDYARD KIPLING says somewhere that every human being has his or her "especial fear." One will dread the rush of seething waters and do deeds of heroism in the face of fire. Another will risk his life in the stormiest seas and be unnerved to helplessness by the hiss and crackle of flames.

My story is of a man who was accounted "brave," because in the course of an ordinary life, the danger from cold steel seldom takes undue prominence.

Once in his childhood, he had been reduced to a state of panic bordering on lunacy, because he had caught up a knife by its blade in the dark. He had only cut himself slightly, but for many nights afterwards he dreamt that he was falling down the smooth granite face of a sky-reaching cliff, from whose polished surface projected a single sharp sword blade. Far below him the light glinted on the up-raised points of other sharp two-edged swords, and, to save himself from falling on these, he had clutched the single blade with both hands, and had felt it cut through the skin and muscles until it grated on the bone.

It was only a dream, although an unpleasant one, and at this point he usually awoke, much surprised not to find his fingers severed from his hands and the bedclothes sopping with his life's blood.

But this happened long ago, and was forgotten, with other childish things. And if you had asked any of Jeff Wardlaw's fellow-jackaroos on Maxworth Downs for his character, they would have given him a good one for courage, and, moreover, could add that he was a jolly companion, never shirked his share of work, and was not unduly proud because he had the handsomest face and figure and the most "winning" ways with women of any fellow in the district.

The boss of Maxworth Downs had an only daughter called Barbara, a pretty little flirt, who prided herself upon a certain gentle hard-heartedness; in fact, she had no wish to lose her heart and lay aside the merry life which had been hers for the last few years. She had many admirers, of course, chief amongst them the bank clerk from the neighbouring bush town. He was a tall thin fellow, with sandy hair, large ears, and an honest, ugly face, whose one redeeming feature was a pair of kindly quizzical grey eyes.

Barbara liked Fred Rodwell fairly well, but she looked down on him not a little because of his utter want of knowledge of riding, shooting, and swimming, for he had been brought up within sound of Bow Bells, and had worked hard at his desk since his boyhood, with no time for athletics or recreations of any sort.

Now he was in Australia he was learning to ride, and Barbara had been witness of his attempts many times when he came out to her father's station. He had failed her, too, in a critical moment—viz., when she had sent her dog into a lagoon to fetch out a stick. The poor animal became entangled in the weeds. Rodwell was with her, but could do no good, for he was unable to swim, and had not Jeff Wardlaw, the new jackaroo, appeared on the scene, Skiff's earthly pilgrimage would have been over.

Jeff slipped off his coat and boots, and lightly clad in moleskins and shirt went to the rescue, and anyone who knows the treacherous weed lagoons "out west" understands that this is no easy or safe thing to do. But Wardlaw would have risked his life again every day of the year (in the same way), for the smile and thanks Barbara gave him when he returned the exhausted and half-drowned Skiff to his mistress's arms.

Jeff was handsome enough not to look ridiculous even with so much superfluous mud and water about him, and Rodwell felt with a queer sadness at his heart that to be insignificant and plain in looks is handicap enough in the race of life, without the added burden of a poverty-stricken youth, which had kept him bound to a musty desk, when he might he might have been learning to ride and swim and develop his muscles with the larger half of England's unthinking boyhood.

That happened a month ago, however, and now that the show was on in the little country town Rodwell had been more in it, for there were two balls, and he was a good

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dancer, which Jeff was not, and it almost seemed as if fickle Barbara's fancy was wavering again.

The day after the ball she was sitting with a girl friend in the station trap, watching the buck-jumping contest, in which, so far, the famous Outlaw from Mason's Creek had got the best of it, for he had kicked, and bitten, and plunged to so much purpose that no one had been able to mount him.

Barbara's friend hid her face in her hands and trembled, but Barbara watched the contest with glowing cheeks and excited blue eyes. The warm sun gleamed on her coils of red-brown hair beneath her white hat, and showed up the snowiness of her muslin frock.

"Oh," she cried, "how can they let The Outlaw beat them! Where is Mr. Wardlaw? He could ride it, I am sure."

Her girl friend gave a faint little shriek, for she, too, had felt the fascination of Jeff Wardlaw's individuality.

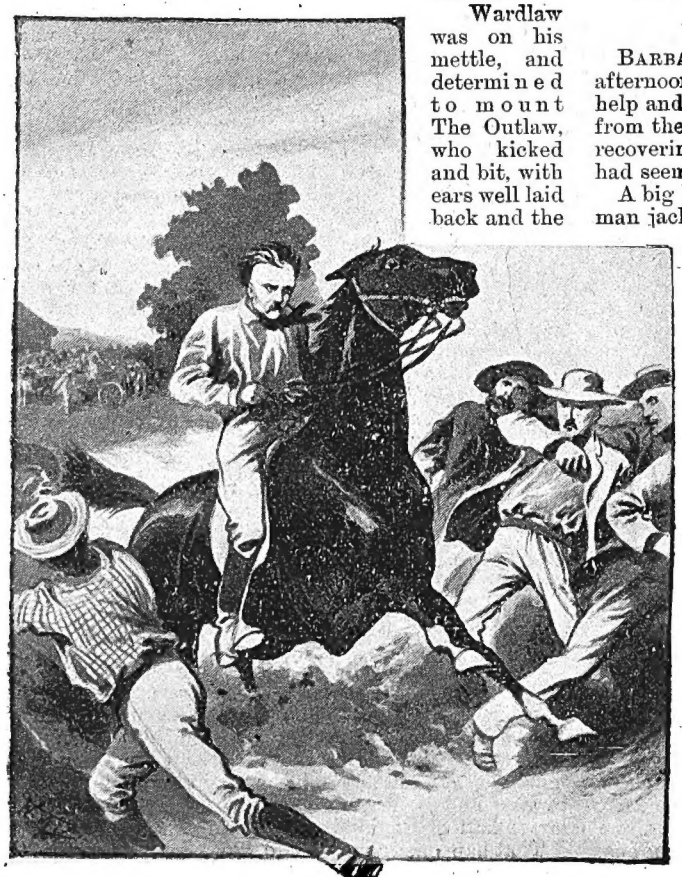
"Oh, Barbara, do not suggest such a thing! Why, it killed one man and disabled another for life, before they gave up trying to break the horse in," she said.

"What is the use of it all?" said Rodwell, who was leaning on the near wheel. "I should say discretion is the better part of valour in this case."

"There he is," cried Barbara as Jeff's tall figure appeared through the crowd. "I knew he would ride the horse."

There was a good deal of the primitive woman about Barbara.

Wardlaw was on his mettle, and determined to mount The Outlaw, who kicked and bit, with ears well laid back and the whites of as wicked an eye as ever a horse possessed showing dangerously. Jeff looked a fine fellow indeed as he battled with the animal, and the crowd yelled appreciatingly when, after a long struggle, he succeeded in swinging lightly into the saddle, and settled himself for the contest.



The crowd scattered right and left as the horse dashed through.

The Outlaw bucked, of course, but Jeff did not mind that; he could ride well. However, the horse seemed to go mad with rage at being beaten, and Barbara paled suddenly as, taking the bit in its teeth, The Outlaw playfully tried to rub Jeff off against the rails of the cattle pens, and then made a clean bolt for the river, which ran between rocky banks bordering the western end of the show ground.

The crowd scattered right and left as the horse dashed through, and then closed again to follow the mad flight. Barbara sprang out of the buggy and ran also.

However, more by good luck than good management, Jeff managed to get free, and threw himself off just as the horse plunged madly over the steep banks to be dashed on the rocks below. Jeff was only a little shaken and bruised, and told Rodwell to take Barbara away while they got a gun to end the miseries of the headstrong Outlaw. He was happy, indeed, for he had seen a look in the girl's blue eyes which told him his hopes were not in vain. And he was not mistaken, for Barbara admired courage more than any other quality.

"He is a plucky fellow," said Rodwell generously.

"He does not know what fear is," answered the girl.

II.

Barbara was alone on the station one Saturday afternoon, except for the company of a little half-caste help and a traveller who had arrived the night before from the township, and was resting in one of the huts, recovering from "the horrors" probably; at any rate, he had seemed too ill to move on.

A big bush fire having broken out unexpectedly, every man jack, from the boss to the Chinaman cook, was away helping to put it out. Being Saturday, the girls were busy, for, in spite of the cook's absence, dinner must be cooked for the jolliest night of the station week; and Barbara, with sleeves rolled up over her white, rounded arms, was deep in the mysteries of pastry.

The shadows were lengthening in the tangled, sweet-scented garden, and the station was so still that one could hear the splash of water as the colony of coots bathed in the rushy shallows of the creek, and the cooing voice of a scrub dove in the plantation of sheoaks near the stable.

The half-caste girl was crooning to herself in the back kitchen, singing her swan song, although she did not know it. Her mistress looked at the fire, and called out to the girl to bring some wood, and she obediently pattered out into the yard. Then Barbara heard a scream; not an ordinary shriek at all, but the sort you may hear if you ever happen to be on a sinking ship at the moment the deck slopes before the final plunge into the waters of death.

Barbara had never been in a shipwreck, but she knew the worst, whatever it was, had happened. Her heart leapt, and then seemed to stand still, as she ran to the door.

The tall, young half-caste lay in a tumbled

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heap beside her scattered armful of wood, her head strained unnaturally backwards, and a long, deep gash across the lean, yellow throat, from which the red blood was gushing. There was blood, too, on the long, sharp blade of the butcher's knife in the hands of the powerful-looking man who was stooping over her. He was a young fellow, with a negroish cast of features and lint-white hair, and she recognised him as the man who had begged a night's shelter the evening before, but he was changed now by the unmistakable glare of madness in the red-rimmed eyes.

The girl did not faint or scream; she knew that she was alone with the murderer on the station, and that her only safety lay in flight. Like most old station houses, Maxworth bolts and bars existed in name only. There was not one room which could be closely fastened in the whole building. No, she must try and reach the garden, and hide in the rushes of the creek until she could get unseen to the road, along which the men would soon be coming.

The half-caste was quite dead, she could see that, and, with the icy weight still at her heart, Barbara turned to steal away, and would have managed it successfully had not her pet kangaroo, who had been lying in the shade of the wood-heap, made a spring towards her, and so attracted the madman's attention.

Barbara fled towards the scullery and banged the door, and, with the strength born of despair, dragged the big safe across it. But she knew that her case was hopeless unless help came speedily; knew that before another half-hour was over mistress and maid would be on a more equal footing than ever before; that her beautiful white body could claim nothing better from the earth than the lean, unlovely one of the daughter of a despised race.

The man laughed wildly, and chattered to himself of spirits and the sacrifice. Before she could reach the one high window, the safe fell in with a crash, and the strange, white face, with its bloodshot eyes, was close to her. She ran behind the wide table, all her senses seemingly doubly alert, for she heard without noticing the splashing and twittering of the coots in the reedy shallows, and then the faint, even thud of horses' hoofs on the road which wound over the hollow ridge.

The horse plunged madly over the steep banks.

Ah! if she could only keep him at bay a little longer! He seemed about to spring across the table, but after a moment of indecision changed his mind, and, with a snarl of rage, threw his weight against it, striving to crush her against the wall, at which Barbara found her voice and sent a scream ringing through the house, for through the open window she had seen Jeff Wardlaw spring off his horse at the gate of the back-yard.

The madman made a sudden spring on to the table, and, seizing the girl by her hair, dragged her head backwards just as Wardlaw burst open the scullery door.

"The knife, the knife!" shrieked Barbara. "Take it from him!"

With the inconsistency of his kind, the lunatic turned and made a rush at Wardlaw. The latter saw Barbara's terrified, appealing eyes, but he saw also the sharp, unlifted knife, and a vision of that lean throat with its horrible gash he had seen in the back-yard blotted out the living woman's face.

He only knew that the madman was coming to kill him—to pull back his head with more than human

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"The knife, the knife!" shrieked Barbara. "Take it from him!"

strength—to cut deep into the stretched skin with that sharp knife!

Long afterwards he remembered how the look of terror in the girl's blue eyes was overlaid by a slow wonder and bitter scorn, as he fled in an overmastering panic—the lunatic close behind him, to where his horse was standing at the gate. He threw himself into the saddle, dug his spurs into the animal's sides, and urged it at full speed away from the long sharp knife and bloodthirsty eyes of that brute in human shape—and away also from the defenceless woman whom he loved.

Barbara was not killed, after all, for Wardlaw's flight kept the madman gesticulating and dancing after him for a minute or so, as he disappeared in a cloud of dust up the road, and the girl had time to steal away into the garden, and through the plantation on to the road at the back of the house, for, with a thrill of joy, she remembered that Rodwell was due from town at any moment, and her trembling limbs had not carried her far when she saw him riding leisurely along with the overseer, whom he had picked up at the boundary gate. I don't know whether his surprise or joy was the greater when he saw her running to meet him, but he knew that something distressing had happened when he saw her wild looks. Poor Barbara's over-strained nerves gave way when she saw his kindly face.

"The madman," she gasped: "he is at the house; he has killed poor Rosie," and then she fainted in Rodwell's protecting arms.

The two men carried her to the overseer's cottage, where she soon recovered, and then they went on to the house and succeeded in disarming the mad traveller and shutting him up in the harness room until the arrival of Barbara's father, who dispatched a man to town for the police.

Wardlaw did not return to Maxworth Downs except once to get his things and receive his cheques. Urgent news had met him in town recalling him to the south, so he said, and as Barbara kept a silent tongue, no one in Maxworth knew the real reason of his sudden departure. Years afterwards the weekly paper brought excitement to the old station, for it told how Jeff Wardlaw had received the Humane Society's medal for saving life under circumstances calling for unusual courage. And Barbara's plain-faced husband felt vaguely jealous as he watched her read the account; he could not interpret the look of mingled scorn and regret—as for a lost ideal—in those clear blue eyes.

And to his dying day Jeff Wardlaw will remember that same look in those same eyes, when he left the one woman he cared for to her fate—the one person on earth who knew him for a coward!

And yet Wardlaw knows that he was the sport of fate—of circumstances—call it what you will, and had the madman chosen any other weapon but cold steel Barbara would have been his beloved wife, and his "special fear" unknown to anyone but himself.

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WITH THE VIOLETS.

FOUR grey stone walls, strong and relentless as the grave, shut out the beauty of the southern night; but I know the moon is rising over the purple waters of the sea, for a white radiance is creeping to the broad edge of the grated window. It is so high, this cruel window! I cannot reach the bars, though on this, my last night on earth, I long for a glimpse of the sea—the beautiful sea which I have loved so well all my life.

"A short life," they will sigh, who read to-morrow on my coffin-lid: "Elinor Delamere, *ætat* twenty-three."

I asked Paul this morning to have *Resurgam* engraved on the marble slab which will mark my last resting-place. A mere fancy of mine, for I know, past all doubting, I shall rise again. Violet knows it also, but if she comes some day to stand in the twilight by my tomb, it will be as if my voice speaks to her when she reads that word in the marble. She may feel sorry and forgive me then. If she could let fall a tear above my dust, perhaps a cluster of violets would spring up among the blood-red roses that grow out of my dead heart.

This bunch that lies on my breast to-night Paul plucked for me in the dear old nook known to us alone. The bonny things are faded. It is curious that a violet will not live with me, when I love them so. But their season is ending now; after to-morrow there will be no more violets in Martinique. Though they will not live with me, I am to die with them.

How bright the moonlight is. Is it moonlight—that tremulous, silver sheen which clings so softly to the black bars, and falls athwart the damp floor in a broad band of glory? See! As I watch it, fascinated, out of it, pale and stilly, grows a face. Leon—Leon! He smiles at me in the old way, and keeps his hand over his heart, that I may not see the cruel wound. So I have seen him, night after night, for six long months. Not yet, Leon! In the grey dawn my soul will keep tryst with yours in the beyond. But I must leave this story for Paul to read when he comes to say farewell and finds me gone. Poor Paul, who would die in my stead if he could.

It is gone, that beautiful face. Only the moonlight still trembles across the bars, and a breeze of the waning night lifts the hair on my forehead. The winds of memory are blowing over my soul. I hear the ripple of a far-off sea rising above the sound of the breakers that dash against the rugged cliffs of Martinique.

Oh, to stand once more with Leon on that stretch of yellow sand, and watch the turn of the tide at the headland, far away where the white sails gleam! No sea is so blue as this of my dreams—no sky so sunny and cloudless. Through all the long aeons, reaching back to the beginning of this earthly pilgrimage, memory shows no picture so fair in my eyes. What have I ever wanted in all the waste of centuries save Leon—only Leon, whom in this life I met too late?

I saw him for the first time in a crowd. His face dawned upon me like a star, and a restless fever swept my soul. In the flash of a moment I recognised him—I, Paul Delamere's wife.

Oh, love of the long ago! Mine from the very first, when our souls were struck out as twin sparks of divine fire from the infinite glory! It is barely seven months since our lines crossed so strangely—so tragically—in this flower-haunted island, set like a gem in southern waters.

Violet—my Violet—was with me. Violet Delamere, with hair like burnished gold, and eyes the same shade as the flower for which she was named. My hair is golden, too, but not like hers, and I have eyes to match—tigerish eyes, Leon called them. Did he remember, I wonder, those old, old days when we roamed the tangled jungles of India together. Some of that wild blood runs in my veins still.

Violet is tall and stately as a lily. Six months ago I was her dearest friend; but friendship is a flower of fragile growth. It has no depth of root, and earth frosts blight it easily. I would have laid down my life any day for Violet; but Leon was my soul. I could not give him to her.

I think Paul was forgotten just at first. We lived in a happy dream, marred by no thought of an awakening. It seemed to me those days must last for ever—that Leon and I would go on drifting with that deceptive tide which was steadily bearing us out to sea, though we knew it not. The first hint of danger came from Violet.

"Elinor," she said one day, while I sat waiting for Leon, who was to drive with me, "what is to be the end of this flirtation with Leon Vincent?"

A flirtation! So that was the way it looked to Violet—this recognition between two souls, adrift in the desert. As I glanced up at her, for the first time I noticed how pale and wan was the sweet face, how full of brooding shadows the beautiful eyes.

"Violet," I cried sharply, "you are ill, dear—your face is like snow. What has become of all your lovely colour?"

And then a chill of fear struck cold to my heart, for she sank at my feet and hid her face against my knee like a desolate child. I felt her sobs jar my inmost soul, and though I wished to lay my hand caressingly on her rippling hair, something checked me—I know not what.

"What is it, Violet?" I asked, sitting there like a statue.

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Was it a surprise, the story she told me when she could command her voice? I cannot tell, but the old pain is heavy at my heart as I recall her confession. She fancied herself in love with Leon, poor child! What curious conception of love these earthlings have! The surface of the water is rippled by every passing breeze; but the storm that stirs it to the depths comes but rarely.

"Leave him to me, dear Elinor," she pleaded, lifting her eyes to mine. The tears stood thickly on the long lashes, but she brushed them off and clasped my hands tightly. "End this wicked flirtation, my sister. You are breaking Paul's heart as well as mine. Have you not noticed the terrible change in him since Leon came? He is dying, Elinor, and it is you who are killing him. Why are you so strangely unlike yourself? There is a look in your face at times that fills me with dread. Cease trifling with Leon—he will turn to me if you will let him. Oh, Elinor, Elinor, listen—he is nothing to you!"

I laughed—I could not help it. Nothing to me, Leon, my other self! If Violet could have looked back through the silence of all the centuries that have elapsed since we begun this pilgrimage of earth, she would not have said that. She shrank from me when I laughed, and then I heard Leon's step and we went off together.

On the way we passed Paul, and though he smiled at me as usual, I could not help seeing how haggard and worn he looked. Violet's words had opened my eyes, perhaps.

What was it Leon read in my face as I turned to him once more when Paul's form was lost in the distance? To this day I cannot remember how it happened; the understanding between us had been mutual, yet silent. My heart stood still when Leon checked the horses in the shadow of the acacia hedge, just where the Veva river flows down to meet the sea. An old bridge crosses the stream a little beyond. He helped me from the carriage, and we walked thither together. Not a word had been said, but a hand of ice seemed to touch my soul.

I dared not meet the look in Leon's eyes. The dream was passed, the awakening had come. I knew it before the silence.

"Elinor," he said simply, "I am going to ask Violet Delamere to be my wife."

I raised my head and looked at him then—a long, level look that read his soul as easily as one reads a printed page. Ah, yes, the dream was at an end—that brief, beautiful dream! He caught my hands in his and held them; his breath swept my cheek; his eyes burnt into mine.

"Must it be, Elinor," he whispered, "or will you lose the world for my sake and come with me across the sea to the land of the purple grapes that haunts your dreaming moments? My Elinor, what is the world to us, who only want each other? You are mine, and mine alone. I claim you, dear; I will never give you up!"

My heart was breaking, but I met his gaze with one calm, steady, and dauntless. I had to be strong for both.

"Leon," I said gently, "I belong in this life to Paul. In wedding him I did him an irreparable wrong; but I will not add to my guilt—I will not break his heart."

"Then I shall marry Violet," said Leon, dropping my hands and turning his face away.

I knew then what I had to do—I heard it in the moan of the sea below the cliffs; but I gave him one more chance.

"You do not love her, Leon," I said, clasping both hands over his arm. "Will you wrong the sister as I have wronged the brother? Oh, Leon! are you no nobler than this?"

He would not listen to my pleading. He turned his face towards the mountains, where opaline mists clung so heavily that their summits were invisible. A moaning wind crept up from the sea as we stood there, sweeping across our faces the heavy perfume from the blossoming acacias.

"I shall marry Violet," Leon reiterated, and suddenly clasped me in his arms.

It was then I stabbed him with the little Italian dagger I always wore thrust through the masses of my hair. Ah, I knew well where to find his heart! I could not give him up to Violet.

I knelt on the ground, supporting his head, and he smiled at me, though the beautiful eyes were glazing fast, and his breath came in faint gasps. My hand clung to his.

"Such a little hand," he whispered painfully, "to give a blow so fatal! Adios, Elinor, till we meet again."

A breath, a sigh, and he was gone. I let his lifeless head fall gently back upon the turf, and arose to stand face to face with Paul.

Do you think he shrank from me when he saw that still form at my feet, and my white dress all crimson dyed? You do not know Paul. He is the noblest, truest soul in all the world. He is a saint—a martyr. My crime made no difference in his love, and he would have saved me even then. He said I was insane—that all my fancies concerning Leon were proof of my madness. And Violet said so, too; but I laughed at them both. They knew nothing of the ages that we passed together, Leon and I. How should they?

Six months have elapsed since first I crossed the threshold of this gloomy cell. Paul says I am in a refuge for the insane, but I know it is a prison, and that I have been tried for my life, and found guilty. The scaffold of death stands black and sinister out there in the white moonlight, waiting for Elinor Delamere to climb its steps in the grey dawn. Yes, I am to die with the violets; but no hempen cord will ever touch my throat. Paul will find but my breathless form when he comes for that last leave-taking; my soul will be in the beyond with Leon, who awaits me.

I should like to look once more on Violet's face ere I slip into the unknown. Horror and despair were written in her eyes when I saw her last. It was the day Leon died. I cannot blame the child, yet I am not sorry for what I did. Leon could not belong to two, and if Violet knew all she would thank me—of this I am sure. Dear little Violet! I have loved her since that far-off life when she was but a tiny blossom bearing that name and I a blood rose, drinking the same dews, kissed by the same sunbeams in that lovely Moorish garden beyond the sea. She will find some day the twin violet that blossomed with her there, and Paul will claim his eagle mate. When the time comes, no one will grudge me my Leon.

Leon, Leon! How that one name repeats itself over and over in my soul! The dawn is almost here. The first grey streak that strikes aslant the black bars brings me release. When sunrise lies like a crimson glory on land and sea, I shall be sleeping with the violets. Adios, Paul, dear Paul!

GRACE PARKER.

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100,000 PRIZES.

A PRIZE FOR EVERY COMPETITOR.

1	Prize of	ONE HUNDRED POUNDS.
1	„	FIFTY POUNDS.
1	„	TWENTY POUNDS.
5,000	Prizes of	Handsome Watches.
5,000	„	Ladies' Companions.
5,000	„	Sporting Knives.
5,000	„	Hair Brushes.
5,000	„	Hand Mirrors.
5,000	„	Silver Brooches.
5,000	„	Gold-Plated Pencil-cases.
5,000	„	Silver Bangles.
5,000	„	Penknives.
5,000	„	Pen and Pencil Boxes (3 deckers.)
10,000	„	Paint Boxes.
10,000	„	Boxes of Dominoes.
10,000	„	Pearl and Porcupine Penholders.
10,000	„	Compasses.
10,000	„	Boxes of Crayons.
20	Prizes of	ONE POUND each.
20	„	TEN SHILLINGS each.

From now until November 25th a coupon will appear on the front page of cover of SHORT STORIES, PEARSON'S WEEKLY, HOME NOTES (May 27th), and PASTIMES. To the person who collects the greatest number of these coupons and sends them to us on a date we shall specify later, we will give the sum of One Hundred Pounds; to the collector of the second greatest number we will give Fifty Pounds, and so on until the whole 100,043 prizes have been awarded.

SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER.

This is the only competition that has ever been devised in which every competitor will get a prize.

All the articles enumerated above are of the best make and well worth possessing, therefore no prize will be given to any person who sends fewer than 200 coupons.

The prizes altogether will cost us about £10,000.

Ask any friend of yours who reads our papers to give you his coupons.

The Competition will run for twenty-nine weeks. If the members of your family take in "P.W.," "H.N.," "S.S.," and "Pastimes," and you collect the coupons from each, this will give you 114 coupons. You can easily obtain from your friends the balance to make up the 200, in which case you will be certain of getting a prize.

A TIP.

Don't be afraid to send only 200 coupons. Sometimes the best competitions ever devised miss fire. People say, "What is the use of my going in for it? I won't win anything." These are just the occasions on which you will. If everybody thought the same, your 200 coupons would win you £100.

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A PRETTY French peasant girl began the working of it, sitting under the shade of green vines in sunny France. Her lover was far over the sea. Adele came of a family of lace-makers, and she said to herself:

"I'll work my own bridal veil in my holiday time, and then when Arthur comes to marry me, shall I not be a fair, gay bride? No lady's veil shall be finer."

But Arthur came to claim her long before the veil was finished, and she married him—her young English lover as poor as herself—and went with him to England. The veil went with them, packed away at the bottom of a trunk, and—forgotten.

It lay forgotten for twelve years, until a lovely little ten-year-old fairy broke its long sleep at last.

She had dark eyes, like the little French lace-maker of old, but she had the English golden hair—Arthur's own.

"Oh, the pretty lace!" she cried, clapping her hands, and dancing with delight as Adele shook it out of its folds. "May I have it for a wedding-dress for my dolly, mamma?"

The pretty matron laughed and shook her head as she pressed the delicate fabric to her lips. Then she told the child the story of its making.

"I will finish it for you," she said, "and then, when the time comes for my little Victorine to be a bride, she will have a veil to be proud of."

So again the pretty taper fingers toiled busily over the delicate lace, and masses of graceful flowers and fairy-like ferns grew steadily under them.

Little Victorine watched the progress of the work with keenest interest.

"Mamma, teach me to work it," she said one day. "My fingers are ever so much finer and tinier than yours!"

So she began to work a veil for her doll, and the facility with which she learnt the graceful work was surprising. At the age of fifteen she was so expert that Adele allowed her to take part in the creation of the wonderful veil itself.

But as they only worked at it by fits and starts, as the fancy seized them, it was still unfinished when Victorine was seventeen, and Henri Riviere came a-wooing her.

Henri came of noble blood, and was well-to-do. His parents had left him some money; not enough to live upon in idle luxury, but enough to give him a fair start in business life. Knowing that in Paris his noble relatives would not scruple to oppose such a course as he had decided on, he chose London as the scene of his efforts, and commenced business as a merchant there.

The young people had "met by chance, the usual way," and the fact that Victorine's mother came from France had been a bond between them from the first. Now, after a year's acquaintance, Henri declared his love, and the coming spring was to see their happy wedding.

Then Adele set to work in earnest to finish the bridal veil.

"I tell you, Monsieur Riviere, no lady of your proud house evere wore lace more exquisite and rich," said she. "And shall I not be proud, when I see my daughter in her marriage robes; and think of the poor little peasant girl of long ago, who toiled at the lace to earn coarse, black bread, so far away over the sea!"

Henri turned quickly at those words.

"What peasant girl was that, madame?" he questioned uneasily.

"Myself!" she answered pleasantly, never noticing his look or tone. "What was I but a poor little peasant lace-maker, when my generous young lover, the father of Victorine, married me?"

Henri made no answer, but his haughty family pride had received a blow.

"A lace-maker!" he said to himself. "A peasant girl! If I had but known it sooner!"

And this knowledge of his bride's humble extraction so annoyed him that he became irritable, impatient, fretful; and finally he conceived an absurd but violent dislike to the bridal veil.

"I hate the sight of it!" he cried one evening, when he and Victorine were alone.

"For goodness' sake, if you love me, never work at it in my presence, dear Victorine. And if I dared ask a special favour of you, it should be—"

He paused, frightened at his own imprudence; she sat listening in great surprise.

"Well?" she said. "It should be—?"

"Wear any other veil in the world but that one to be married in."

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She folded up her work very quietly and deliberately, though with trembling hands. She had wondered, of late, at a strange and subtle change in her lover; now she began to ask herself was she going to learn its cause? She said, with forced calmness:

"That is a singular favour. Are you aware that my dear mother worked this veil?"

The hot, impulsive temper answered hastily, and without second thought:

"That is the very reason that I hate it!"

And then she understood him. The daughter of England had been slow to comprehend the pride of this French aristocrat, but she saw all clearly now. She marry the man who thought he stooped to take her! not though her heart broke!

Henri had aroused a pride as stubborn as his own, though of quite a different nature.

Gently, but firmly, she said to him:

"You did not know, when first you sought me, that mamma was a poor lace-maker in France. Since you have known it you have regretted our engagement. Do not speak. I have seen a change in you. I know that this is so. But there is no harm done," she held out to him a little trembling hand; "since I learn this before it is too late. I will grant you the favour you ask." Here he would have kissed the trembling hand, but she drew it quickly away.

"Your bride shall never wear my darling mother's veil, because I shall never be your bride!"

No need to dwell upon what followed. His prayers, his protestations, humble at first, then angry, his tears, they had no power to change her resolution.

And so at last they parted coldly, lovers still at heart—for ah, love dies not easily—but outwardly seeming scarcely friends.

She stood proudly as he left the room, but when the sound of the closing door struck like the knell of hope on her passionate young heart, she sunk down upon the floor, sobbing wildly:

"My love! Oh, my love! And I have lost him!"

Her parents questioned in vain. She had quarrelled with Henri; that was all that she would tell them. And before time or chance for reconciliation came, her mother was stricken with mortal sickness, and in three days lay dead; and Victorine, quite overwhelmed by grief, was prostrated with an attack of brain fever.

And at this very juncture a summons came from France, demanding Henri's immediate presence.

Strange changes had been happening there. Three lives that stood between him and the title and estates of the Marquis de la Riviere had been suddenly swept away, and so they sent for him, the heir.

At first his heart swelled with exultation, but it sank again. Victorine! had he not lost her?

"I care for neither rank nor wealth unless she shares them!" he cried. "I will go and once more implore her pardon."

But Victorine was lying dangerously ill, and he was not allowed to see her. Go he must, and a few weeks after arriving in Paris he wrote, informing her fully of his altered fortunes, and imploring her to forgive, and accept once more as her true lover, the Marquis de la Riviere.

But she never got the letter.

The house to which it came was empty.

The once happy home was broken up; the husband and father had followed Adele to a better world; and their child, for whom husband, title, and fortune were waiting in sunny France, was earning sorrowful bread as a lace-maker.

So the Marquis waited for an answer in vain; until after many months his own letter was returned to him through the Dead Letter Office.

It came like a messenger of hope. So! She had not refused to answer him, as he had thought.

The next day saw him starting for London.

Need I describe his welcome there, or tell of the crowds that flocked to claim acquaintance with "the Marquis?" But none could tell him anything of Victorine, except the story of her sorrows.

And after three months' search he had failed to find her. He had money, influence, deepest heart-interest to aid the search, yet it failed.

One evening he made one of a party of a tableaux vivants (for he had to go into Society sometimes, however little he liked it), and the particular tableau in which he took part was that of a wedding. Suddenly one of the buttons on his cuff caught in the bride's lace veil. In an instant he had recognised that once-hated lace—it was Victorine's bridal veil!

"I borrowed it of a lace-maker," the lady who wore it explained. "I would have bought it, but she would not sell. It was her mother's work."

"A young girl?" he gasped.

"Oh, no, indeed! A poor, thin, jaded creature, with fine eyes, certainly, but ill and worn. I shall be glad to give you her address if you have work for her. I am sure she needs it."

Well, she never needed for anything after that night; love and happiness came to her in bounteous measure, and stayed with her forever afterward.

Pale, and thin, and somewhat careworn still, was the bride of the Marquis on her wedding day; but in his eyes—the eyes of true and faithful love—it was still the sweetest face in all the world that smiled under Adele's bridal veil.

And the Marquis kissed the lace and blessed it, because through it he had found her again.

"I love it now!" he cried. "It shall be kept as a precious treasure, always."

And so it was. Many a fair and high-born bride wore "the bridal veil of Riviere" in the years to come; but among them all none were more truly blest than the poor lace-maker, whose mother was a peasant girl, but who for true love's sake and for love alone, was chosen by her faithful lover to be Madame la Marquise de la Riviere.

BERTHA HILL.

An absent-minded woman, mistaking herself for the tea-kettle, filled herself up with water, and sat down on the stove to boil. She discovered her mistake soon after.

A Suburban Fox-hunt.—Huntsman: "I say, farmer, did you see a fox running this way a little while ago?"

Farmer: "Yes, I did. The last I seed of him he was a-running up the railway lines as quick as he could."

Huntsman (thoughtfully): "We must take the next train, or we shall never catch the brute."

It was little Dot's first visit to a farm, and she went with her aunt to see how the pigs were fed. The little one gazed in astonishment at the young porkers for a moment, and then placing her hand on her curly hair, she said reflectively:

"Aunty?"

"Yes, dear."

"Does 'oo put all the piggies' tails in curl papers?"

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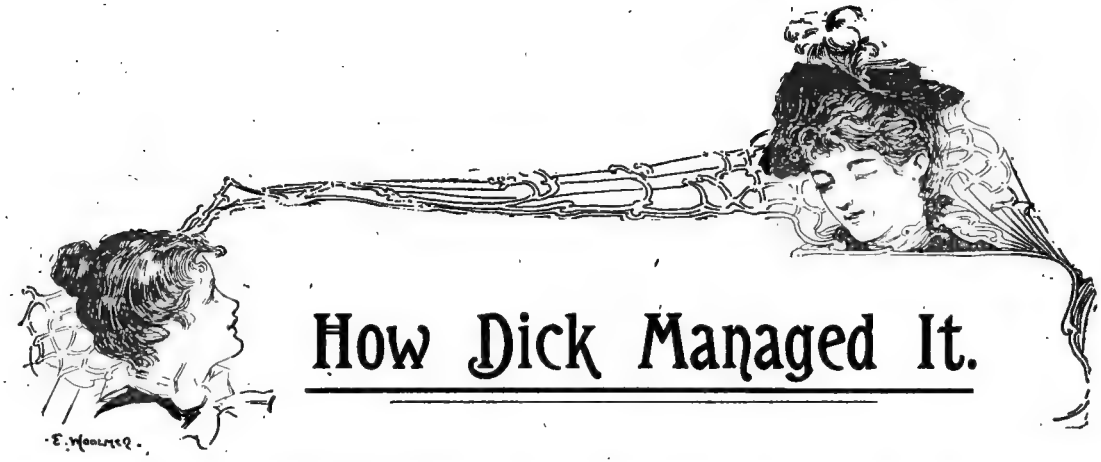

How Dick Managed It.

THEY sat at the same table at the Oxford Street branch of the Inflated Bread Company. She was young, fair, and pretty. He was tall, squarely-built, dark, good-looking, and about twenty-five.

"Will you allow me, madam?"

"Oh, certainly, but you won't find much mustard in the cruet."

"The warmth of your politeness will make up the deficiency."

"Sir!"

"Madam, I mean what I say."

A moment's pause.

"Will you permit me to return the cruet—and thank you."

Another pause.

"You have dropped your gloves; madam, allow me."

"Oh, thank you!"

She blushed.

"I'm grateful to you for this pleasure. I am always delighted to find you here. Not annoyed, I hope?"

"It's rude to stare."

"When mere curiosity is the motive. I have a different feeling."

"What's the difference? You don't know me."

"I know you now, I claim."

"But the circumstance of our meeting forbids acquaintance outside."

"Not unless you desire it."

Yet another pause.

"You are only curious."

"Curiosity, madam, is a precarious condition, because it is subject to much suspicion. Mine is a different feeling altogether, and it prompts me to ask you to know me outside. May I claim the privilege?"

They paid their bills and went forth.

"Why do you want to know me? Is there anything interesting about me?" And a pathetic smile lit up her face.

"To answer you truthfully, there is. May I breathe its sacred name? It is Love."

"But you mustn't love me!" she cried.

"I didn't say that."

"You said so just now."

"I apologise for the misunderstanding. I couldn't love you."

"What a strange man!" she thought.

"I would do anything for you; I would live for you—die for you. No, no, I wouldn't do that, but I would go to the uttermost corner of the world for you, but you could never succeed in winning my love."

"Oh this is interesting; I want more of it. Are you engaged?"

"In the day-time, yes, and sometimes at night. I am a journalist."

"To be married, I mean."

"There is no such obligation hanging about my neck, although I am in love."

"Then she does not return your love?"

He heaved a heavy sigh.

"I love her passionately. She is all in all to me—we live for each other—sigh and pine for each other, but we daren't think of marrying."

"How sad, very."

They both sighed.

"She is as good as dead to me."

"How sad—very sad."

"Her sister is the principal objector to my suit."

"Shameful!"

"But what she objects to in me I don't know."

"Nor I."

"I beg pardon——"

"I said, nor I."

"This lady knows me only by a false reputation. She does not know me personally, and yet she refuses to be introduced to me. I don't know the nature of the grudge she has against me."

"Oh, jealously, because she hasn't her sister's chances."

She sneered.

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, my sex are very funny in things of that sort."

"We have to have recourse to the agony columns to exchange our love passages."

"Dreadful!"

"And it is so expensive, besides being inconvenient."

"Do you know her sister?"

"By sight, yes. Read this."

He showed her an agony column part, "Vera to Dick. Like ivy I cling to thee; yours till death; mater ill; must see you; say where."

"How strange. My sister's name is Vera, and she's engaged to a gentleman named Dick. And my mother's ill, too."

They had arrived at the Marble Arch.

"Let me win your sympathy, Miss Hill. I am your sister's Dick, and I want you to be my sister."

Dick and Vera were married the following August.

MULVY OUSELEY.

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THE HOUSE OF A TRAITOR.

As you leave Porte Vecchio and go north-west towards the interior of Corsica, the land rises rapidly, and, after three hours' travelling through winding paths, obstructed by huge rocks and often cut by deep ravines, you find yourself on the edge of an extensive *maquis*. The *maquis* is the country of the Corsican shepherds, and of those who are at enmity with justice.

You must know that the Corsican labourer, in order to spare himself the trouble of manuring his fields, sets fire to a certain extent of wooded land. So much the worse if the flame spreads farther than is necessary, but then he is sure to have a fine harvest when he sows his seed in this soil fertilised by the ashes of the trees it once bore.

The grain reaped and carried away (for they leave the straw, which it would be troublesome to gather), the old roots, which have remained in the earth unconsumed by the flames, shoot forth in the following spring very thick branches, which in a few years attain a height of seven or eight feet. It is this kind of heavy underbrush that goes by the name of *maquis*. A man can only open a passage through it axe in hand, and *maquis* have been known so thick and bushy that the mountain sheep themselves cannot get through.

If you have killed a man, fly to the *maquis* of Porte Vecchio, and you will live there in safety, provided with a good gun, powder, and ball, and a brown cowled cloak, which will serve as both mattress and covering.

The shepherds will give you milk, and cheese, and chestnuts, and you will have nothing to fear from justice or the relations of the defunct, except when you will be obliged to go to town to renew your ammunition.

Mateo Falcone, when I was in Corsica, lived about half a league from this *maquis*. He was quite rich for that country, living "nobly," in Corsican phrase (that is to say, without working himself), from the produce of his flocks, which the shepherds, a kind of nomadic race, pastured here and there in the mountains. His skill in shooting passed for something extraordinary, even in that country, where there are so many good shots.

His wife had brought him at first three daughters (to his great rage), and finally a son, whom he named Fortunato.

He was the hope of the family, the heir to his name. The girls were all well married; their father could reckon upon the daggers and carbines of his sons-in-law. The boy was only ten years old, but of a promising character.

One fine day in autumn Mateo went early with his wife to visit one of his flocks in a clearing in the *maquis*.

The little Fortunato desired to go with him, but the clearing was too far off, and, besides, someone must remain to guard the house. So the father refused.

He had been gone some hours, and little Fortunato was lying quietly in the sun gazing at the blue mountains and thinking how he was going to dine next Sunday in the town with his uncle, when his meditations were suddenly interrupted by a shot. He jumped up and turned towards the side of the plain whence proceeded the noise. Several shots followed at irregular intervals, approaching nearer and nearer, till suddenly, in the path which led from the plain to Mateo's house, appeared a man wearing a pointed cap, such as the mountaineers wore; he was covered with rags and dragged himself painfully along, leaning on his gun. He had just been shot in the thigh.

This man was an outlaw, who, having gone during the night to buy powder in the town, had, on his way fallen into an ambush of Corsican police. After a vigorous defence he had succeeded in making good his retreat, hotly pursued and firing from rock to rock. But he was not far in advance of the soldiers, and his wound made it impossible for him to reach the *maquis* before being caught.

He approached Fortunato, and said to him: "You are the son of Mateo Falcone?"

"Yes," said the boy.

"I am Giannetto Sanpiero. The soldiers are after me. Hide me, for I can go no farther."

"But what will my father say if I hide you without his permission?"

"He will say you have done well."

"Who knows?"

"Hide me quickly. They are coming."

"Wait until my father comes back."

"You are not Mateo Falcone's son. Will you let me be arrested before the door of your house?"

The child appeared moved with compassion.

"What will you give me if I hide you?" said he, drawing nearer.

The outlaw fumbled in a leathern pocket which hung from his belt and drew from it a five-franc piece, which he had doubtless saved for the purchase of powder. Fortunato smiled at the sight of money, and, seizing it, said to Giannetto:

"Fear nothing. I will hide you well."

Then he made a great hole in a heap of straw near the house. Giannetto crawled in and the child covered him up so as to leave him a little air to breathe without it being possible to suspect, at a casual glance, that this heap of straw could hide a man. Moreover, with a cunning ingenuity worthy of a savage, he caught a cat and her kittens and placed them on the top of the straw as if it had not been moved for some time. Finally noticing traces of blood on the path, he carefully covered them with dust and then calmly lay down again in the sun.

A few moments after six men, in brown uniforms with yellow collars, and commanded by an adjutant, were before Mateo's door. This adjutant was a distant relation to Falcone. He was called Teodoro Gamba, an active man, much feared by the outlaws, of whom he had already captured several.

"How do you do, little cousin?" said he, smiling, to Fortunato. "How you have grown? Have you seen a man pass here lately?"

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"This morning M. le Curé rode by our door on his horse, Teodoro. He asked me how papa was, and I told him."

"Ha! little villain; you are playing the rogue. Tell me quickly which way Giannetto went, for it is he I am after, and I am certain he took this path."

"Who knows?"

"Who knows?" roared the adjutant; "I know that you have seen him."

"Can one see all the passers-by when one is asleep?"

"Confound you; I am very sure you have seen Giannetto. Perhaps you have even hidden him. Comrades, go into the house and see if our man is not there. He was dragging along on one foot, and he knows too much, the rogue, to try and reach the *maquis* while limping in that manner. Besides, the marks of blood stop here."

"And what will papa say," asked Fortunato, "when he knows people have entered his house when he was absent?"

"Rascal!" said the adjutant, seizing him by the ear, "do you know that I can make you sing another tune? After I have given you twenty blows with the flat of a sword you will speak."

"My father is Mateo Falcone," said Fortunato, with emphasis.

Gamba was evidently embarrassed. He talked in a low voice with his men, who had already searched the house. It was not a lengthy operation, for the cabin of a Corsican contains but a single square room.

The furniture consists of a table, some benches, a chest or two, and hunting and cooking utensils. Meanwhile the little boy played with the kittens, and seemed to take a malicious joy in the evident confusion of his cousin and the soldiers.

"Little cousin," said the former, "you seem a very wideawake fellow; you'll make your mark; but you are playing an ugly game with me, and if I was not afraid of giving pain to my cousin Mateo I would carry you off with me."

"Bah!" said the child.

"But when my cousin Mateo returns I shall relate the whole affair to him, and he will whip you for having lied to me."

"Really!"

"You will see. But hold—you are a fine boy, and I will give you something."

The adjutant drew from his pocket a silver watch worth about ten crowns, and observing that the eyes of the child sparkled as he looked at it, he said to him, holding the watch dangling by its steel chain:

"Would not you be delighted to have a watch like that hanging from your neck? You would walk the streets of Porte Vecchio as proud as a peacock; and when people would ask you: 'What's o'clock?' then you would say: 'Look at my watch and find out.'"

"When I am a big boy my uncle will give me a watch."

"Yes, but your uncle's son already has one: not as handsome as this, to be sure; but then he is younger than you."

The child sighed, and said with a bitter smile:

"Why do you joke with me?"

"I am not joking; only tell me where Giannetto is, and the watch is yours."

Fortunato smiled incredulously, and, fixing his black eyes on those of the adjutant, he tried to read there how much to believe of what he said.

"May I lose my epaulets," cried the adjutant, "if I do not give you this watch provided you do as I ask. My men are witnesses, and I cannot retract my promise."

As he spoke he held the watch nearer, so that it almost touched the child's face. Fortunato showed plainly in his face the struggle in his soul between covetousness and the respect due to hospitality. However, the watch continued to turn and twist about, and sometimes struck the end of his nose. Finally, little by little, his right hand rose slowly towards the watch, the end of his fingers touched it, and he felt its weight before the adjutant dropped the end of the chain. The dial-plate was sky blue, the case newly polished, and, in the sun, it shone like fire. The temptation was too strong.

Fortunato raised his left hand slowly, and pointed with his thumb over his left shoulder at the heap of straw. The adjutant instantly understood the gesture. He let go the end of the chain, and Fortunato felt himself sole possessor of the watch. He arose, and ran a few steps from the heap of straw, which the soldiers commenced immediately to overturn.

It was not long before a man, covered with blood, poniard in hand, crawled out, but as he tried to rise to his feet his wounded thigh did not allow him to stand erect. He fell, and the adjutant threw himself upon him and seized his stiletto, and he was soon securely tied, despite his struggles. Lying on the ground, and bound up like a faggot, Giannetto turned his head towards Fortunato and hissed, "Son of a dog!" The child tossed back the five-franc piece Giannetto had given him, feeling that he had ceased to deserve it, but the outlaw paid no attention to this movement.

While the soldiers were employed, some in making a kind of litter out of branches and the others in dressing Giannetto's wound, Mateo Falcone and his wife suddenly appeared at the turn of a path which led to the *maquis*. The woman walked slowly, bending painfully under the weight of an enormous sack of chestnuts, while her husband strolled by her side, carrying only his two guns, one in his hand, the other in his shoulder belt, for it is unworthy of a Corsican to carry any burden but his arms.

As he caught sight of the soldiers, his first idea was that they had come to arrest him. But why? Had Mateo any trouble with the law? No; he enjoyed a good reputation; but he was a Corsican and a mountaineer, and there are few such who, in searching their memory, cannot recall some peccadilloes, such as gunshots, dagger thrusts, and other like trifles. Mateo, more than most men, had a clear conscience in this respect; for more than ten years he had aimed his gun at no man. He was, however, prudent, and he took a position to make a brave defence, if necessary.

"Wife," said he to Guiseppa, "put down your sack and be ready."

She obeyed immediately. He gave her the gun from his shoulder-belt, which might cramp his movements. He then loaded the one he held and advanced slowly towards his house, skirting the [illegible] which bordered the road, ready, at the least hostile demonstration of the soldiers, to throw himself behind the largest trunk, whence he could fire under shelter. His wife followed in his tracks, holding the spare gun and its cartridge-box—the business of a good housewife is to load her husband's gun in case of a combat.

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On the other side of the field the adjutant was much troubled at seeing Mateo advance in this manner, with measured steps, gun in hand, and his finger on the trigger.

"If, perchance," thought he, "Mateo should be a relative to Giannetto, and he wished to defend him, the contents of his two guns could reach us, one after the other, as sure as a letter by the post, notwithstanding our relationship." In this perplexity he took the brave resolution to advance toward Mateo and relate the whole affair to him, accosting him as an old friend; but the short distance that separated him from Mateo appeared terribly long.

"Ah, my brave comrade," cried he, "how goes it? It is I, Gamba, your cousin."

Mateo, without replying, had stopped, and, while the other spoke, slowly raised the barrel of his gun so that it pointed to the sky at the instant the adjutant reached him.

"Good-day, comrade," said the adjutant. "We have just seized Giannetto Sanpiero."

"Heaven be praised!" cried Giuseppa; "he stole a milch goat from us last week."

These words rejoiced Gamba.

"Poor beggar," said Mateo, "he was hungry."

"The knave fought like a lion," continued the adjutant, somewhat mortified; "he killed two of my men. Afterwards he was hidden so finely that I should never have discovered him had it not been for my little cousin Fortunato."

"Fortunato!" exclaimed Mateo.

"Fortunato," said Gamba, "yes; Giannetto was hidden under that heap of straw yonder. But my little cousin showed me his hiding-place. So I will tell his uncle in town, and he will send him a fine present for his trouble. And his name and yours will appear in the report that I shall send to the Governor."

"So?" said Mateo.

They had reached the detachment by this time. Giannetto was already lying on the litter, and ready to depart. When he saw Mateo in Gamba's company he smiled strangely, then, turning his head towards the door of the house, he spit savagely on the sill, crying: "The house of a traitor."

Only a man who had resolved to die would have dared to use the word "traitor" in connection with Falcone. A stab from a stiletto would have immediately avenged the insult. But Mateo made no other gesture than carrying his hand to his head as if overcome with grief. Fortunato had gone into the house when he saw his father arrive; but he soon reappeared, carrying a bowl of milk, which he offered to the prisoner, his head hanging down.

"Away, cur," cried the outlaw to him. Then, turning to one of the guard: "Comrade," said he, "give me a drink."

The soldier handed him his gourd, and Giannetto drank the water given him by a man with whom he had just exchanged shots. Then the adjutant gave the signal of departure, bade adieu to Mateo, who did not reply, and they descended with rapid steps toward the plain.

Ten minutes passed before Mateo opened his mouth. The child glanced uneasily sometimes at his mother, then at his father, who, leaning on his gun, looked at him with an expression of furious anger.

"You begin well," said Mateo finally, in a calm voice, but a terrible one to whoever knew the man thoroughly.

"My father!" cried the child, advancing, tears in his eyes, as if to throw himself at his knees. But Mateo cried: "Back!" and he stopped, sobbing, and motionless, a few steps from his father.

Giuseppa drew near. She had just perceived the chain of the watch, one end of which hung from Fortunato's shirt.

"Who gave you that watch?" she asked, in a severe tone.

"My cousin, the adjutant."

Falcone seized the watch, and throwing it violently against a stone, broke it into a thousand pieces.

"This child," he cried furiously, "is the first of the race of Falcone who has been guilty of treachery."

The tears and sobs of Fortunato redoubled, and Mateo kept his eyes sternly fixed upon him. Finally he struck the butt end of his gun to the ground, threw it over his shoulder, and took his way towards the *maquis*, bidding Fortunato to follow him. The child obeyed.

Giuseppa ran after Mateo and seized his arm. "He is your son," said she in a trembling voice, fixing her black eyes on those of her husband as if to read there what was passing in his soul.

"Leave me," said Mateo; "I am his father."

The mother embraced her son and entered the house weeping. Throwing herself on her knees before an image of the Virgin she prayed fervently.

Meanwhile Falcone walked down the path some two hundred paces and stopped on reaching a little ravine. He sounded the earth and found it soft and easy for digging.

"Fortunato," said he, "stand yonder near that great stone."

The child obeyed and fell on his knees.

"Say your prayers," said Falcone.

"My father, my father, do not kill me!"

"Say your prayers," said Mateo, in a voice which made the child's flesh creep.

The child, sobbing and stammering, repeated the "Pater Noster," and the "Credo." At the end of each prayer the stern father responded "Amen."

"Are those all the prayers you know?" asked he.

"My father, I also know the 'Ave Maria,' and the Litany my aunt taught me."

"Repeat them."

The child finished the Litany in a sinking voice.

"Have you finished?"

"Oh, my father, forgive me! Mercy! I will never do so any more. I will beg my cousin, the adjutant, so hard; he will release Giannetto."

He was still speaking. Mateo raised his gun and took aim, the child made a desperate effort to rise, but it was too late; Mateo fired, and Fortunato fell stone dead.

Without casting a glance at the body, Mateo took his way back to the house to get a spade to dig his son's grave. He had gone but a few steps when he met Giuseppa, who was running toward him, alarmed at the noise of the shot.

"What have you done?" she shrieked.

"Justice!"

"Where is he?"

"In the ravine. I am going to bury him. He died like a Christian. I made him recite his prayers. Heaven rest his soul!"

G. H. LAWSON.

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MY NEIGHBOUR'S BUSINESS

"It's a lady, Mr. Ernest, to see you."

I stopped in the occupation of buttoning up my overcoat, for I was just about to leave the office. It was one of those raw, foggy, sunless days which sometimes come in August—days which seem to accentuate the closing of summer by a sort of dismal contrast of sky and atmosphere.

"A lady!" I repeated, in some surprise, for I had not many lady clients. Our business, the business represented by our sign: "Ernest & Son," on the wall outside, was mostly with shipping merchants, and concerned contracts with the mercantile marine branch of trade. But the man who is actively engaged in business in London soon learns to be astonished at nothing, and I courteously drew forward a chair as a tall, slim lady, dressed in shabby, black silk, and a cashmere shawl long past its prime, came gliding into the room, holding out a card, upon which I read the words:

"Mrs. Burgoyne Beltringham."

"Happy to see you, madam," said I. "Of what service can I be to you?"

"In the old times," said Mrs. Burgoyne Beltringham, rather sentimentally, "your dear father, Mr. Ernest, was my stay and comfort, the head of the family, I may say. My maiden name was Ernest," she explained. "I am a cousin of your dear deceased father. To *him* I always came in any time of trouble or distress. His advice and counsel were valuable to me; but now——"

"I understand," I made haste to say. "Is it anything about ships?"

"No," said Mrs. Beltringham. "It's my daughter. I cannot compel her to do as I desire her to do."

"Oh!" said I. "Is she a little girl?"

"She's seventeen," said Mrs. Beltringham.

At this I drew back slightly.

"In that case," said I, "I really do not see how *I* can be of service."

"Oh, Mr. Ernest, pray do not abandon the case thus precipitately," said Mrs. Beltringham, wringing her neatly gloved hands. "Your dear father would have gone down to the Grange with me; he would have reasoned with Myra; he would have showed her plainly that it was her duty to be an obedient and docile child; he——"

"But I am a lawyer, madam, and not a clergyman. And, you see, I am not my father."

"If you would accompany me down to-night, Mr. Ernest," wheedled Mrs. Beltringham, "it would consume but little of your valuable time. The air of the Grange is most beneficial, and I, a poor heart-broken mother, would feel that my authority was backed up by legal dignity. For the sake of your dear, dead father, Mr. Ernest, I implore you to aid me."

All this may, perhaps, in print, partake of the character of hyperbole, but as she spoke it there was a genuine ring of helplessness and entreaty about it which worked on my sympathies, and almost before I knew it I had consented.

After all, was she not a sort of a cousin? Ought I to refuse a responsibility thus inherited from my own father? And did not all this partake of the nature of an adventure?

Glynn Grange was a weird old house, surrounded with shrubbery, on the top of a hill. A black-looking lake slept close by, within a circle of dark fir trees; an avenue of beech trees led down to a neglected gate. An old woman, with her head tied up, came to the door, and it was some time before the fire in what Mrs. Beltringham called "the west drawing-room," could be persuaded to do anything but sulk and smoke. Our dinner was a curious cong omeration of cold meats and rehashes; and my bed-room, at the end of a long, dark corridor, looked exactly as if it might be the favourite residing-place of a very gloomy ghost. I began to wish I had stayed at home.

Miss Beltringham, the culprit, did not appear at dinner. I had scarcely expected she would. Still it made the matter embarrassing.

"I could not make her come in," said the widow. "She is naturally displeased to hear of the errand on which you are come."

"Pleasant for me," thought I.

"But what have I to say to her when she does come in?" I asked feebly.

"I have every reason to fear," mysteriously murmured the old lady, "that she is encouraging a clandestine lover."

I whistled under my breath.

"Dear me!" said I. "I fear, in that case, she would hardly like me to interfere."

"Dear Mr. Ernest," said Mrs. Beltringham, "for your father's sake, do not desert me in this emergency. He is a fellow of low degree—a common gardener; and she is of the blood of the Ernests and Beltringhams. Do, *do* speak to her!"

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What answer could I make?

I had allowed myself to be dragged into this dilemma. I felt I must get out of it as best I could.

I cannot say that I slept particularly well that night. My room was certainly damp, and I could see wreaths of white mist floating over the black lake below as I peered through the blinds.

The ghost, however, was considerate enough not to trouble me, and when the morning sun shone over the terraced garden below, it really did not look so gloomy.

But as I sat there looking out, a tall, slight figure, with a white, fleecy-like shawl wrapped lightly round her shoulders, glided down the central avenue, with a furtive look back at the house. At the same moment I saw a rough-looking man in a coarse straw hat and clad in overalls, come up the walk as if to meet her. Instinctively I opened the low French window which gave on the lawn, and stepped out. The rough stranger disappeared at once, behind a row of fruit trees. I walked calmly down the path.

"Miss Beltringham, I presume," said I, lifting my hat.

"Mr. Ernest, I suppose," said she.

"May I ask," said I, gesturing with my finger, "who *that* man is?"

"Certainly," said she composedly. "It is the gardener from the village."

"And you came here to see him?"

"I came here to see him—certainly! Are there any other questions you would like to ask me, sir? My name is Myra Beltringham. I am seventeen and a half years old. I left boarding-school last year. I have had the measles and scarlet fever—"

"Miss Beltringham, I beg you to cease," I cried.

"Have I left out anything?" said she, looking me in the face with "divine audacity"; and then I perceived how exceedingly pretty and dimpled she was, with cheeks fresher than any roses, hair shot with gleams of gold, and blue, indignant eyes. "Now, Mr. Ernest, since you have really come all the way from London to investigate my affairs, I will be frank with you—"

"Miss Beltringham, I beg—"

"Be so kind as to hear me out, sir," said she, with the gesture of a princess. "I admit everything. I *do* come out here daily to see this man. It is because I am selling him the roses, pinks, carnations and heliotropes which I have myself planted and reared in the garden. He is in the employ of a florist in London. I met him privately because I did not wish poor, proud mamma to know that we are reduced to this. I decline to abandon the business because it helps to meet a good many of our unavoidable debts. So if you have any objections to urge—"

"But I have none," cried I. "Pray, Miss Beltringham, do not consider me such a meddler."

"I do not know what else you are!" said Myra, severely as a young Diana.

I was silent. She walked on to rejoin the man in the overalls, who was all this time waiting for her in the shadow of the pear-trees, and I turned back to the house, feeling extremely mortified.

After breakfast, however, as I was putting on my gloves to return to the train, she came up to me.

"Mr. Ernest," said she. "I am very sorry."

"So am I," I observed quietly.

"Mamma has been talking to me," pleaded she. "I know now that you acted only by her desire."

I inclined my head.

"That was all," said I.

"Mr. Ernest, will you forgive me for that ungracious, unjust, unreasonable burst of temper? Will you consider it all unsaid?"

"I will do anything that you ask me," said I, flinging my dignity aside in the sunshine of that winning smile, those heaven-blue eyes. Since the days of Helen of Troy, what man ever could resist a woman's beauty?

So we parted good friends. Need I add that I came down again the next week; that I kept coming; that Myra and I became lovers, engaged people—married, all in the due course of time? And that we have fitted up the Grange for a summer home, and that the florist goes elsewhere for his cut flowers now? Does it not all follow naturally enough?

B. H. T.

A QUESTION OF ANALYSIS.

THE STORY OF AN UP-TO-DATE DETECTIVE.

I HAD dropped in at the rooms, 223 Baker Street, to find my friend Garnett absent, and his things in the confusion that follows a hasty departure.

I threw his pyjamas and nightcap back into his bedroom and shut the door on the disorder within, took a peep into what had been my own bedroom, but which he now used for his chemical experiments, and then pushed the chairs into place and cleared a space in the middle of the sitting-room, preparatory to enjoying a quiet smoke.

From where I sat I could see through one of the windows down into the street, and just as I cut the end off my cigar, noting at the same time that it was the last I had with me, my glance fell upon a man running in a diagonal direction from round the next corner towards No. 223. A few seconds later there was a sound of footsteps on the stairs, and the landlady ushered this same man into the room.

He paused for a moment to regain his breath. I motioned him into the chair opposite.

"Are you—Mr. Robert Garnett?" he gasped, trembling from what might have been utter exhaustion or fright. At the same time he felt into a cheap cigar case in an upper waistcoat pocket, but his fingers came away empty.

"Mr. Garnett is out," I answered, "but will, I think, be in directly. I am Dr. John Wilson."

I offered him the cigar that I was just preparing to smoke. He seized it, struck a match, inhaled several deep whiffs, and uttered a sigh of relief.

"That's better. I am an inveterate smoker, and nothing but tobacco will brace my nerves. They

need bracing now!" Then he went on puffing again.

I rose from my chair and walked over to the mantelpiece to get Garnett's pipe.

"I am in a terrible fix," he said, leaning towards me.

"What is the trouble?"

'Murder!"

"You have murdered someone?"

"No, but I am in instant danger of being accused of doing so. Oh! I wish Garnett were here. It's my fellow-lodger. Last night we were out late and finally had a quarrel. I wouldn't go home with him. This afternoon I went round to the rooms—we live in Axminster Court—and I found the place in charge of the police. My partner had been murdered in his bed!"

The fellow had smoked his cigar down till it burnt the band. He threw the stump down and then began to fidget.

"When is that detective coming?" he groaned.

I began to repeat my assurances, when he jumped up, seized his hat, and with an "I'll come back again," flung out of the room.

I sat still, watching his retreating figure through the window, and pulled at the pipe. Another minute and Garnett hove in sight, his tall figure and loping gait making it easy to recognise him in the crowd. A half minute later he was bounding up the stairs and into the room, but not before I had slipped the empty pipe back on the mantelpiece where I found it, and resumed my place at the window.

"Hallo! You, Wilson? I *am* glad to see you. Who was the other?"

"What other?"

"Your visitor."

"Now, really——"

"Oh, come! A man was sitting here talking to you within the last three minutes."

"Well," I said, undone by his assurance, "I admit it. But first tell me how you know, and then I will tell you about him. It is important, too."

"Very simple, and quite plain. The room smells of tobacco."

"I was smoking your pipe."

"But my pipe tobacco makes a grey smoke. That blue cloud up there is from a cigar. The smell, however, is of my tobacco, showing that both were smoking at once. There is the cigar, and the dash of ashes where it fell shows that it was not thrown from your chair, but from the other. Now about the visitor. Is it a case?"

"Yes. You met him just at the corner. Tall, slightly cross-eyed, a straw hat with a blue band."

"I noticed him. A collector, I should judge. By-the-way, I have a rather perplexing case on hand now. You will be interested. I slept late to-day, and was aroused about noon by a summons from Gregson. There has been a murder or something in a place called Axminster Court."

"My visitor came to see you about that."

"Ah, he must be the man who lodged with the corpse! So he came to engage me, did he? What particulars did he give you?"

"Well, really none, I think. He was very nervous, and I found that he is a nicotine fiend."

"Pshaw! Well, he will come back. I haven't had anything to eat to-day. You will join me in a bite?"

He rang the bell, and presently the landlady brought in a dinner that she had been trying to keep warm. I helped myself sparingly, and Garnett began to feed himself, talking between mouthfuls.

"This problem is likely very simple, but it baffles me more completely so far than anything I have had of late. The second floor of the Axminster Court house contains a long narrow passage which opens into the various rooms. This passage is reached from the ground by two staircases, one at the back and one at the front. At the head of one of these staircases is a room occupied by a cobbler, an old ex-soldier, with a wooden leg.

"Next to this room is another, which has been used as a lodging by a young man named Peter Nobb, a collector for a laundry company, and one, Charles Beauregard, a man of fifty years, and whose principal occupation, at least since coming to that neighbourhood, has been to keep drunk on a small income.

"This morning Beauregard was seen about the place in his usual unsteady condition until about ten o'clock, when he went into his room and bolted the door on the inside. An hour later Constable Hace broke into the room and found the man dead in bed with a round depression in his skull, where he had been struck by the round head of a shoemaker's hammer.

"The case, as I said, is very remarkable. There are plenty of data. These are of such a character as to admit of the most satisfactory analysis. But the result is anything but satisfactory. The conclusion I reach from a full review of the evidence is that the man cannot be, and therefore is not, dead. But this conclusion certainly does not agree with the facts, for they have the body at the mortuary.

"Here are the details in brief. Gregson came at noon and wanted me to have a look into the case. We went and found the place as I have said. Constable Hace's evidence was to the effect that he had looked through a crack in the door, and had seen the dead man on the bed. He had put his shoulder against the door and burst it open. Had made sure that the man was dead, and had hurried to keep out the crowd of tenants who were attracted by the breaking door. He had then reported to headquarters. Gregson had been detailed, and had called in Manfield. When they were baffled they came for me.

"I found the room just as it was when Hace first broke in, except that the body was gone. I made a preliminary examination of the surroundings. The only furniture was a double bed, two chairs, and a washstand. There was one window, and two doors. One of these opened into the passage; the other into the shoemaker's room. Now to try a little analysis.

"The man was dead. The cause of his death, apparently, was a blow from a hammer which lay on the floor, and which, I have since ascertained, fits the depression in the skull to a nicety. *How was this blow caused?* Analysis means to divide or split up. There is more than one basis of division; we will consider the possibilities of (1) human agency, (2) agency other than human.

"If human agency, we might divide into intent or accident; but this division will help us none. Let us say, rather, (*a*) was the hammer *held* by a human? or (*b*) was it thrown or projected through space? Then, still further, was it the victim himself who wielded the hammer, or was it some other human?

"Now let us consider an agency other than human. First, as wielding the hammer by actual contact; and second, by throwing or projecting it through space.

"Before carrying the analysis any further, I will speak of the examination of the surroundings I made, and then consider the questions this analysis brings out in the

light of that examination. The window was fastened, and so covered by dust and spider webs as to show beyond question that nothing had passed through it for months. An examination of the passage door showed that, as the constable had thought, the door was bolted on the inside, and his rush against it had torn the staple from the woodwork.

"The door leading into the shoemaker's room was not bolted on either side, but was locked, and the key had not been seen for ever so long. Moreover, the shoemaker's bench was placed across this doorway, and he had been sitting there all that morning. The crack in the passage door, mentioned by Constable Hace, was too narrow to allow the hammer to pass through. The ceiling, walls, and floor of the room I inspected thoroughly, and am sure that there is not an opening of any kind bigger than a small rat hole.

"Now to review the questions. Was the blow struck by the victim himself, and if so, did he hold the hammer in his hand, or throw it? I am satisfied that the wound is in such a place and of such a character that this possibility may be dismissed. Next, was some other human the immediate cause of the blow from the hammer, and if so, was it held, or was it projected through space? Only by one route could the murderer have had ingress to the room to strike a direct blow or to throw the weapon; that is, by the door across which the shoemaker's bench stood. Under this head, however, there is still another possibility. Suppose that the hammer was already in the room, before the passage door was bolted? It could not have been wielded on the end of a pole, for the only opening, the crack in the door, would not allow of it. But it might have been tripped by a string from a height. There was a shelf high up above the bed and I was sure I had solved the mystery; but on examination it proved to be covered with a quantity of dust that showed no sign of having been disturbed.

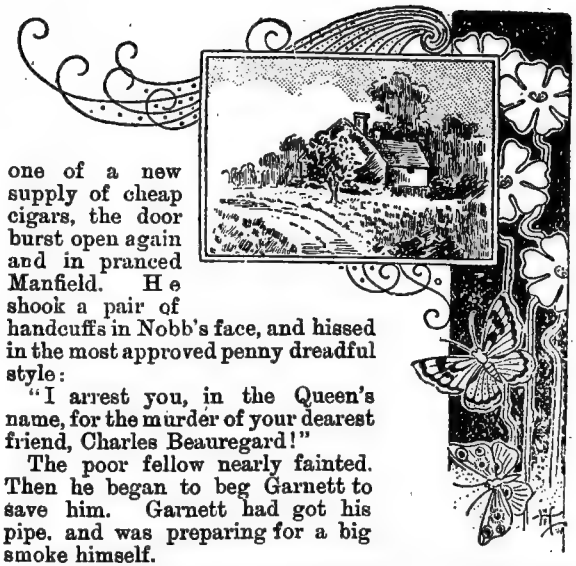
"As for an agency other than human, which either held or projected the hammer: It could not have been shot into the room, we have already decided. An ape could not have brought it in any more readily than a man. A rat might have tipped it off the shelf, but you can't get round the dust.

"Now we have viewed all the possibilities, and the only explanation we have is the suspicion aroused against the old shoemaker. After we had talked it all over, Gregson was so convinced of my reasoning that he arrested the cobbler at once. To make the case stronger, the hammer with which Beauregard was killed was found to be the mate of another in the shoemaker's kit, and he acknowledged that it was his.

"But now I have a host of little witnesses, whose evidence proves the old man's innocence. It seems that he makes friends with all the children in the Court, and they play in his shop. Just after breakfast, they say, they slyly tied his wooden leg to his bench, and some of them hung about all the morning to enjoy the joke when he should try to get up. Gregson admits that he found him thus tied when he arrested him.

"To corroborate *this* evidence, I have taken out the lock of that door and found that the dusty tumblers of the lock had not been thrown for weeks, at least. Thus you see, the conclusion drawn from the most rigid deductions is that the man could not be, and is not, killed. Is it any wonder I am puzzled?"

Just at this point the landlady ushered in my visitor, Peter Nobb, who lodged with the murdered man. And almost before he had taken the proffered seat, puffing at



one of a new supply of cheap cigars, the door burst open again and in pranced Manfield. He shook a pair of handcuffs in Nobb's face, and hissed in the most approved penny dreadful style:

"I arrest you, in the Queen's name, for the murder of your dearest friend, Charles Beauregard!"

The poor fellow nearly fainted. Then he began to beg Garnett to save him. Garnett had got his pipe, and was preparing for a big smoke himself.

"Caught the right man, Manfield? What is your evidence?"

"They had a very violent quarrel last night."

"Pooh!"

"Well, that isn't evidence, but it's strong probability."

"Pish!"

"Well, if you know so much, name the man you suspect. Gregson says you're stumped."

Garnett was pulling furiously at his pipe. Suddenly he struck his forehead. "I have it!" he shouted. Then he looked oddly at Manfield. "I think (puff) when the truth (puff) comes out, you and Greg (puff) son will be (puff, puff) the two worst sold men in the service. I'm going to (puff) make an arrest myself," and he jumped up and put on his hat.

As he opened the door in walked Gregson. He looked disgusted and annoyed.

"Hallo," said my friend. "How's your man?"

"I let him go," answered Gregson shortly. He looked at Manfield and the bracelets on Nobb's wrists. "Better let *him* go, too." He handed a sheet of paper to Garnett, who had stepped back into the room. It was a note addressed to the superintendent.

"Last winter," Garnett read, "a man who is now known to the public as Charles Beauregard killed my brother. The circumstances were such as to make his conviction before a court impossible. I decided to take the law into my own hands. The murderer had taken a name then unknown to me and lost himself in the East End. In order to facilitate my search, and to support myself while it lasted, as well as to ensure my escape from suspicion, I secured a position on the police force." Garnett stopped to chuckle. "This morning when I had found the murderer I boldly broke in his door, executed him with one blow of a hammer, and then reported the mysterious murder to headquarters, as you would have expected from their humble servant,

JOHN HACE, Constable."

"The analysis was all right," said Garnett, as he unlocked the handcuffs from Nobb's wrists, "but I didn't carry it back far enough at first. Didn't I say that you official detectives would be sold, when the truth came out?"

JOHN JONES.

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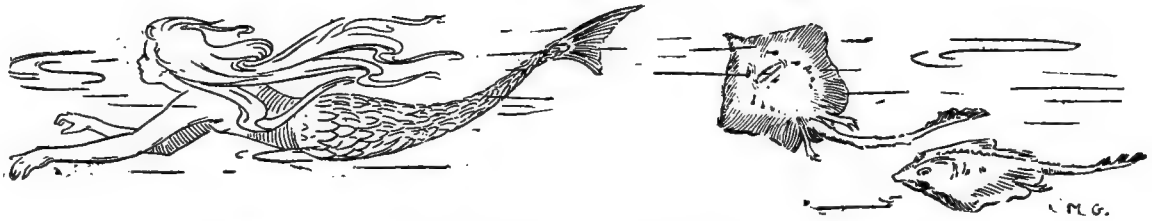

WHEN A WOMAN WILL, SHE WILL—PERHAPS.

"Look," she said, leaning forward and touching his hand lightly, "there's the man you pointed out to me the other day."

He glanced in the direction she was looking.

"Oh, yes! Smith the widower. You seem to be quite interested in him."

"Widowers have as much charm for women as widows for men," she replied. "Besides, being twice a widower makes him doubly interesting. He's handsome, don't you think so?"

"H'm! I shouldn't pick him out for his beauty. As a rule, women have different ideas from what I have on the subject of masculine beauty. However, I once had a woman tell me I was handsome."

"You are modest," she answered. "It wouldn't do for me to tell you that you are good-looking. It would seem as if you had been fishing. But let's talk of Mr. Smith. Tell me all you know about him."

"Well, I won't attempt to describe his appearance, because your imagination is so much better than mine. As for his social standing, it's all that can be desired. Moreover, he's very wealthy, and is considered an excellent catch, if that's what you want to know."

"How could you guess it! Really, you're becoming brilliant. Now, if you'll believe me, that is exactly what I do want to know. I have decided to marry him."

"By Jove! That is sudden. But how are you going to manage it, since this isn't leap year?"

"Never you mind. I think it's Thackeray who says that a woman can marry any man she wants, and I intend to marry Mr. Smith."

"How do you know he hasn't some one else in mind? I won't offer the other alternative, namely, that he should have decided that there should be no third Mrs. Smith, because I know he could not remain invulnerable to your charms."

"Very prettily put, I am sure. If I hadn't made up my mind to become Mrs. Smith I should marry you."

"Thanks, awfully! Don't you think he may be somewhat smitten with the lady he has with him? He is very attentive to her."

"Don't call her a lady. She couldn't be one if she tried. No woman who wore such a costume could be a lady. Now, let me see," she continued. "I must be forming my plan of action. You're acquainted with him, are you not?"

"Slightly. Why?"

"I want you to introduce him to me. I tell you what to do—call the waiter and send over your card. Then he'll come and you can do the introducing. I'll manage the rest."

"The first move is good," he answered, as he complied with her instructions.

"Of course it is. It is merely a sample of what the rest will be, however. Your waiter is everlastingly slow. There, he's handed him your card. He's looking for you now. What a charming smile, and what beautiful teeth. Why doesn't he come? I shouldn't think he'd have to consult the frump he's got with him. If she sees my hat I know she'll try to keep him from coming. But perhaps she doesn't appreciate Virot. She doesn't seem to have patronized him."

"I shouldn't wonder if she were near-sighted," he replied; "she seems to be scrutinising her companion quite closely."

"Don't try to think up mean things to say. There, he's coming! How splendidly he carries himself! What's the meaning of that sigh? Don't you feel well?"

"I am suffering from ennui. I should prefer to have you rave over me for a change. Suppose you try praising me to him; you've done the reverse quite long enough, it seems to me."

"You're not jealous, I hope? I believe you've forgotten the definition of platonic———"

"Ah, Mr. Smith," he interrupted. "I took the liberty of asking you to come over in order that I might find out the result of that little venture of ours. I should have come over to your table, but I wanted you to meet my friend," and he mumbled an introduction.

"I am delighted to meet you," said Mr. Smith. "You must be very much in the confidence of your friend, for I never heard him mention our speculation before any one else."

"That is very magnanimous of him, I'm sure," she replied, "for we weren't agreeing particularly well before you came. You are the peacemaker, you see."

"She is right," he joined in; "I think for the sake of peace you had better stay, Mr. Smith. Won't you invite your companion over? There is plenty of room at this table for four."

"Certainly. That will be very pleasant; I'll go and get her," and he returned to his companion.

"What makes you do that? That's just like you to start out well and end up with something terrific. She's coming as sure as fate. How nonsensical she looks with that crazy feather hanging over her ear. But I suppose I must look pleasant," and she smiled as the two approached.

"I knew she would be delighted to come," said Mr. Smith. "Allow me to present my wife. By the way," he continued, turning to his friend, "I heard you were engaged to a Miss De Roy."

"Oh, no, that's off long ago, isn't it, Miss De Roy?" he added in an undertone.

"Yes," she replied, in a dazed way.

A. B. G.

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The Unknown Wife.

At the close of 1811, in the estate of Nenaradovo, lived Gavrilo Gavrilovitch, a Russian proprietor. His unbounded hospitality and frankness won him many friends among the neighbouring proprietors. While many would visit him to partake of his hospitality or to play a game of cards with his wife, Paraskovia Pietrovna, an amiable and prepossessing lady of forty, the thoughts and aspirations of the majority were centred upon his seventeen-year-old daughter Masha.

But, like many other girls of her age and station in the Russian provinces, Masha had been brought up on the French novel, and was passionately in love with a poor army officer who lived a few versts away from her father's estate, and who reciprocated her love.

But Masha's parents positively objected to the match, and the young man's welcome became cooler every day. This, however, did not hinder the lovers from corresponding or from meeting quite frequently in the forest. Amid romantic surroundings, with no human being to detect or overhear them, they would pledge to each other eternal love, would bewail their fate and devise all sorts of schemes.

Elopement was, of course, proposed in due season by the young man, and as Masha was an ardent admirer of all sorts of adventures pertaining to heroism, it more than pleased her romantic imagination.

The cold winter put an end to their secret interviews. The more voluminous, however, became their correspondence. Vladimir would entreat his beloved in every letter to intrust her destiny to him, to elope, to keep out of sight until the excitement should be over, then to appear before her parents, who would undoubtedly become resigned to the inevitable, to kneel down before them and beg their forgiveness and blessing.

And this, according to his calculation, would surely end in: "Come, children, to our embrace and be happy."

All this seemed very fascinating to Masha, and without much meditation she consented to follow the course suggested by her lover. And the course was this:

On the day of her departure she was to decline taking her meals with her parents at the table, pretending to suffer with a severe headache. Thus she would be enabled to make the necessary preparations for the journey in her room. Her servant, who was in the secret, was to accompany her to the garden gate, where a troika, or span of three horses, sent by Vladimir would be in waiting. They were then to drive as fast as the horses could carry them to the church in the village of Dshadrino, where Vladimir would be sure to meet them.

Now if any one spent a most miserable and sleepless night in Gavrilovitch's house it was his daughter Masha. After packing her things she wrote two very long letters—one to her intimate friend, a young girl of her own age, and the other to her parents.

She took leave of them in the most touching and pathetic words, ascribing her rash action to a providential will, expressing her hope that her step toward perfect happiness might not incur their anger, and concluding that the happiest moment in her life will be that when their paternal blessing will be bestowed on their daughter and her most noble husband.

It was nearly midnight when Masha and her maid left the house. Tereshka, Vladimir's driver, was already awaiting them at the garden gate. He helped them into the sleigh, and after arranging the bundles and packages and seeing that his master's "jewel" was comfortably seated, took up the reins, and in five minutes they were beyond the limits of Gavrilo Gavrilovitch's estate.

While Tereshka is taking care of Masha we shall turn our attention to our gallant officer. Vladimir had his hands full all day. In the morning he visited the Dshadrino minister, who, after considerable difficulty, and upon receiving a handsome deposit, consented to marry him.

Then he set out in search of the necessary three witnesses. The first one he met—a retired colonel, Dravin—consented to accommodate him. This adventure, he assured him, recalled to him his past associations and his own adventures. He insisted upon Vladimir's staying for dinner, assuring him that there would be no difficulty in finding two more witnesses.

And so it happened that no sooner was dinner over than two local proprietors were announced. Both were in favour of the marriage as well as of the means of effecting it, and of course were ready at a moment's notice to offer their services, and, should circumstances require it, to sacrifice their lives for the noble cause. Vladimir was overjoyed. He embraced his friends, and after bidding them an affectionate good-bye hurried off to make the necessary preparations.

The day drew to its close. Night set in. A strong northern wind filled the air with burning cold.

"A storm!" Vladimir thought to himself as he sat in the sleigh driving as rapidly as his horse could carry him to Dshadrino, where he intended to arrive before Masha.

The road to Dshadrino was familiar to him, and he expected to traverse the short distance in an hour at most. The reverse of his expectations, however, was the result. The wind grew stronger and stronger, culminating soon in a raging and blinding snowstorm. The road was swept out of sight, the familiar surroundings vanished.

Vladimir's efforts to keep the right track were fruitless. The horse went on at haphazard, now ascending a snowdrift, and now falling and upsetting the sleigh in a ravine. An hour, two hours passed, but not the slightest sign of Dshadrino.

At last it occurred to him that he was travelling the wrong way. He stopped, reflected a moment and turned to the right. He consulted his watch. It was half-past two in the morning. Oh, horror! But toward Dshadrino he went, in spite of the boundless snowfield and the innumerable snowdrifts and ravines that lay before him. Now and then his sleigh would upset, throwing him into the snow. But his own bodily comfort was the least to be thought of.

At last a welcome object presented itself to his sight. It was a small forest. "Thank Heaven," he thought to himself, "Dshadrino must be near." Thus encouraged, he drove onward. He lashed the horse. The poor animal made an effort to move. He lashed it again and again, but it could not trot. Gradually, however, he passed the forest.

The plain, snowy field, stretching in the distance as

far as his eye could reach, presented itself once more to his sight. Although the storm subsided and the bright moon hung once again over his cheerless and monotonous surroundings, it was bitterly cold.

As he drove along, contemplating all sorts of means to extricate himself from his perilous position, he beheld a village, consisting of four or five little huts. He directed his horse toward it, and as he reached the first hut began to rattle at the window with all the might of a man for whom there is nothing left but despair. A few moments later the window was raised, and a long, grey beard, apparently belonging to the master of the house, became visible.

"What is it you want?"

"Can you tell me how far it is to Dshadrino?"

"Dshadrino! Dshadrino! Let me see. I reckon it will be about ten versts."

A thunderbolt or an electrical shock could not have had more effect upon Vladimir than these words. He remained upon the spot motionless, like a man doomed to death.

"And where do you come from?" resumed the old man

Vladimir had no patience to answer his question.

"Can I hire your horse to take me there?" he uttered at last.

"Hire my horse? Why, man, wait till I buy one!"

"Then give me a guide. I will pay him all he wants for his services."

"This I'll do. Just wait a second. I'll send my son, and he will take you there," said the old man, disappearing in the darkness.

The young fellow, armed with a dubina, soon appeared, and without losing any time they started on their way to Dshadrino. Morning dawned when they reached their destination. The church was locked. After paying his guide he directed his steps toward the minister's house. Alas, his team was not to be seen there! How sad the news that awaited him!

But let us return to Nenaradovo and see what is going on in Gavrilo Gavrilovich's house.

Nothing in particular.

As usual, the old folks rose early in the morning; Gavrilo Gavrilovitch appearing in his ancient "kolpak" and felt jacket, and Paraskovi Paetrovna in her warm morning gown. The samovar was brought in, the table was set, and as Masha failed to appear in the gostinnui, or dining-room, a servant maid was dispatched to her apartment to inquire how she slept during the night and how she felt in general.

The maid soon returned, announcing that the baruishnia (miss) had had a restless night, but that she felt much better now and would soon join then at the table. The maid had no sooner made her report than Masha appeared, approaching her papenka and mamenka with an affectionate good morning.

"How is your health, dear?" inquired Gavrilo Gavrilovitch.

"I feel much better, papa," replied Masha.

"You must have caught cold, Masha," interposed Paraskovia Petrovna.

"That may be, mamenka."

The day passed quietly, but towards evening Masha fell ill. A doctor was immediately sent for, and when he arrived, two hours later, he found the patient in a state of delirium. It soon developed into a high fever, and for two weeks the poor girl hovered between life and death.

No one in the house had the slightest idea about the intended elopement. The letter which she addressed to her parents the night previous she destroyed as soon as she returned home, and the maid, fearing to incur the anger and punishment of her master, kept the secret to herself.

The minister and the witnesses were alike reticent about the matter (they had good cause for it). And as to Tereshka, Vladimir's driver, he knew well how to keep a secret, even when drunk, the more so when sober. Thus the secret was kept sacred by over half a dozen conspirators.

But Masha herself in her delirium began to unravel the mystery. Yet her mother, who never left her daughter's room, paid no attention to her words. She merely ascribed them to the fact of Masha being in love with Vladimir, thinking that in all probability her unsuccessful love was the chief cause of her sickness. Something had to be done, and one fine morning she consulted her husband and some of their neighbours as to the advisability of gratifying Masha's wish.

All came to the conclusion that such was Masha's lot; that the inevitable must happen; that poverty is no crime; that it is not riches that make the man, but *vice versâ*, and so forth.

When our conscience is pricked, and we find no justification for our despotic deeds, we generally cling to highly moral texts, which upon other occasions may not convey the slightest meaning to us.

In the meantime Masha became convalescent. Vladimir was no longer to be seen in Gavrilo Gavrilovitch's house. The rude reception offered him during his last visit kept him aloof from their house. Once more council was held, and it was decided to write and ask him to pay a visit.

But their surprise may be imagined when, in answer to their invitation, he wrote a very indignant letter, declaring his determination never to cross their threshold, asking them to forget him, the unhappiest of mortals, and concluding that death was his only hope and consolation. A few days later they heard that Vladimir had entered the army. This occurred in 1812.

Weeks and months passed by, and none dared to speak of Vladimir in Masha's presence. She, in her turn, never mentioned his name. At the end of four months, while glancing over a daily paper, she happened to see his name mentioned among those mortally wounded in the battle of Borodino. She became almost prostrate with grief, and grave fears were once more entertained as to the possible consequences.

Nothing serious, however, was the result. Five weeks later Gavrilo Gavrilovitch died. Poor Paraskovia Petrovna was almost overcome with grief, and Masha's attention was now wholly devoted to her mother. Nenaradovo, with its sorrowful recollections, was no longer attractive to them, and they decided to leave it and make their home in the city of N——.

In the meantime the Franco-Russian war drew to its close.

Although still surrounded by a host of admirers, Masha was as cool and indifferent to them as at the time when she first came to the city. She changed, however, her opinion, when, one fine afternoon, a wounded colonel, Brunin, with a medal and a Georgian cross in his buttonhole, and a very handsome and attractive face, which seemed the more interesting because of its paleness, was introduced to her. He was quite young—in the neighbourhood of thirty-two or thirty-three.

As to Brunin, he was certainly a fine young fellow. He possessed that humour and self-respect which seldom

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fails to please women. His relations to Masha were unrestrained and natural.

He appeared to be quite settled and reserved, although rumour had it that once upon a time he was the greatest mischief-maker living. This, however, did not lower him in Masha's estimation. On the contrary, she regarded his past tricks as something quite natural to youth and activity. What had interested her most, more than his tenderness, more than his pleasant conversation, more than his bandaged arm, was his silence, often accompanied by heavy sighs.

Indeed her curiosity and imagination upon such occasions were almost beyond her control. She could not help acknowledging that he took more than an ordinary interest in her, while on the other hand, he, too must have observed that of all her admirers he was the only one who received her attention.

What, then, had kept him from falling at her feet and declaring his love? What was the cause? Was it that timidity which goes hand in hand with true love, or the mere policy of a cunning dangler? She reflected upon the matter and came to the conclusion that timidity could be the only cause. Her impatience grew stronger and stronger. Suspense, of whatever nature it might be, and especially when love is at stake, is always burdensome to women.

One evening Brunin appeared in her room—his face paler than usual and his beautiful eyes expressing that tenderness which is both bewitching and powerful. She thought the long wished for moment had come at last. But the "declaration" was not made.

Her neighbours and friends in the meantime discussed her wedding as a matter of fact, while her mother was simply delighted with her prospective son-in-law. Thus time passed on.

One morning, while Paraskovia Petrovna was busily engaged in looking over an old almanac, Brunin entered her room.

"Can Masha be seen?" he asked.

"You will see her in the garden," replied the old woman. "I will expect you to have dinner with us."

As Brunin went out Paraskovia Petrovna crossed herself, supplicating that the proposal of marriage might take place.

Brunin found Masha by the pond under a willow, all dressed in white, and with a book in her hands.

"A real heroine of a novel," he thought to himself.

After the first few words Masha cut the conversation short, thus affecting that mutual embarrassment from which there was but one way of ridding themselves, and that was for Brunin to open his heart. And so he did.

"But I have acted carelessly, most carelessly, by seeing and hearing you every day. I had no right to seek your acquaintance and friendship. Oh, wretched man that I am! It is too late—too late now! Your memory will always haunt me, your charming image will give me no peace. Oh, that I could be spared this torture! Try to forget and forgive me, dear Masha. I am unworthy of you. That obstacle——"

"That obstacle always existed," said Masha, in a suppressed voice. "I could never be your wife——"

"I know," he replied quietly. "I know that you have once loved. But he is dead, and time effaces the sweetest of memories. The thought that I might have been happy with you if——"

"Not another word, for Heaven's sake—not another word! You torment me."

"Yes, I know. I feel that I might have been happy; that you might have been mine; but, oh, miserable man that I am, I am married!"

Masha looked at him aghast for a moment, hardly realising her whereabouts.

"Yes; I am a married man," resumed Brunin more firmly, "but I have not the slightest idea who my wife is, where she is, whether I will ever see her again."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Masha, scarcely able to control her excitement. "Is it possible? Tell me all about it! I will—later——"

"In the beginning of 1812," said Brunin, "I was on my way to Vilno, where our regiment was then stationed. It was a cold night, a storm was raging, we lost our way and our driver was in despair. But as I was in great haste to reach Vilno I ordered him to proceed regardless of the weather. We crossed hills and valleys and rivers, and after being frozen almost to death, entered a village.

"As we drove along the street I suddenly beheld a light. A few minutes later we found ourselves in front of a church. It was dimly illuminated. Some people were inside.

"'This way. This way!' I heard several voices shouting.

"I ordered the driver to stop the horses.

"'What have you been doing all this while?' remarked someone. 'Why, your girl is in despair. The minister was at a loss to know what to do, and we were just ready to drive home.'

"Without considering the situation, I entered the church and was soon directed to a dark corner where, upon a bench, lay the bride, while a girl, evidently her maid, busied herself about her.

"'Thank Heaven you are here at last!' cried the girl to me. 'Why, the baruishnia (miss) is overcome with grief.'

"I had no sooner directed my attention from the bride when the half blind old minister approached, asking me if I were ready for the altar.

"'Certainly, certainly,' said I, hardly knowing what I was about. The bride was helped to the altar. She impressed me as a good-looking girl. Oh, wretched man that I am!

"I took the place beside her at the altar. The minister was impatient, the three witnesses and the maid supported the bride, and it seemed that their entire attention was given to her. We were married.

"'Kiss each other,' commanded the minister after the ceremony was over. My wife removed the veil from her face, and as I was ready to kiss her she drew back, shrieking:

"'Away, away, it is not he!'

"All turned their frightened eyes on me. I retreated quietly, threw myself into the sleigh and was soon out of the village, leaving a scene of horror behind me."

"Heavens," exclaimed Masha, "and you have no idea what has become of your poor wife?"

"Not the slightest, nor do I know the name of that village or where it is situated. I thought so little at the time of such tricks that it soon escaped my memory. My driver, who was with me at the time, has long since died in war, and here I am, with not the slightest prospects of ever finding the woman on whom I played such a cruel joke."

"And do you no longer recognise the girl whom you married on that stormy night?" cried Masha, clasping her hands.

Brunin looked, grew pale, and fell at her feet.

A. G. Carlton.

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From Prairie and Backwoods.

VIII.—THE SQUAW OF BLACK WOLF.

EVERY evening, when they were not away hunting or on the warpath, Black Wolf and his friend Ochilla used to come and sit on the big red rock by the river, to smoke, and talk, and watch the shadows of the tall hills on the other side deepen and grow longer as the sun sank.

The Wolf loved this spot because here he could come and dream and think whenever he liked, with nothing but the birds and squirrels to disturb him, and they went to sleep early. For Ochilla was a silent man, and never spoke unless he had something to say. There was no charm for him in the woods and hills and river. He enjoyed most the silence and his friend's company. Sometimes the Wolf would try to tell him what he saw in Nature, what the leaves whispered to him. Then Ochilla would take his pipe out of his mouth and grunt, and call the Wolf an old woman and a dreamer, and ask him how he thought he would look carrying wood and dressing skins. And then they would both laugh a little, and become silent again.

Sometimes the Wolf would retort, and tell Ochilla that he was a mole, because he could not see and hear all that the Wolf enjoyed, and that it spoilt a man to be married.

This would make Ochilla quite sober, because he had two squaws and the Wolf had none, though the two men were of the same age. For, although the Wolf was one of the bravest warriors in the nation, and had killed many men; though he hung five days in the sun-dance, never flinching; though he had made more single-handed raids, and run off with more horses than any other man in the tribe, and was a successful hunter—his friends had begun to make sport of him, and the women looked at him askance, for among the Sioux it is a disgrace for a man to be unmarried, especially if it be from his own choice. Black Wolf had plenty of horses, and weapons, and saddles, and robes, and could have married many girls if he would, for he was tall and strong, and handsome, but he would not, and Ochilla sometimes became very cross with him.

One evening in the hot weather Ochilla went down to the rock, but Black Wolf did not come. He did not come the next night, nor the next, and the fourth night, Ochilla did not go there because he knew that the Wolf would not come for many nights. His heart was glad, because he knew why his friend did not sit on the rock any more. He knew that every evening the Wolf with two or three other young men, sat in the lodge of old Si-chi-ton-ka, whose daughter, Ano-et-ka, was the prettiest girl in the tribe. And a few days later, Ochilla's youngest squaw told him that Si-chi-ton-ka's family had a talk, and could not decide between the Wolf and his rival Sa-han-te, and that both men would lie outside Si-chi-ton-ka's lodge and take their chances.

Ochilla's heart sank. Sa-han-te had one wife already, but he was said to be good to her, and the Wolf, being untried, he feared him. Besides, Sa-han-te was as handsome as the Wolf, almost as rich, and had a silver tongue. Into a girl's ear he could whisper sweet things of which Black Wolf knew nothing, and cared less. It would be a hard struggle, and Ochilla knew it. So when Black Wolf came past his lodge a few evenings later, and motioned to him to come to the rock, he was not surprised, only sorry.

They sat on the rock a long time before either spoke a word. Then Ochilla: "Well?"

"Son of Long Arrow, it is not well. He of the silver tongue wins. I am no lovemaker. I have given up, and will go away to the Blackfeet. This is no place for me."

Ochilla looked at him sternly.

"Soft-head Coyote! The girl is playing with you. She sits with Sa-han-te, but not under his blanket. She is making you play the fool. Go back, and be a man."

Black Wolf sat a few minutes longer in silence, then rose and went back to the camp. Ochilla looked after him and smiled.

The Wolf walked straight through the camp, to the willows by the creek. He might be too late for this evening. If so, he could talk to old Si-chi-ton-ka and trade horses or saddles an excuse for coming.

From the clump of willows on the left, a tall figure rose suddenly. It was Sa-han-te, and the rivals stood with folded arms, glaring at each other in silence.

Presently a form emerged from the lodge, and Ano-et-ka ran up the path.

Sa-han-te stepped forward with a contemptuous glance at his rival, and seized the girl in his arms.

Did the heavens fall? Did the Wolf dream? For Ano-et-ka struggled in Sa-han-te's arms, and called to him. With one bound he was at her side. Sa-han-te, with an oath, stalked away.

Ochilla, coming down to the creek to soak some arrows, met Sa-han-te going back to the camp, and later saw two persons sitting under one blanket, down by the willows, and he almost leapt for joy.

* * * * *

When people are first married all goes well. Both the newly wedded ones are anxious to please, and so they are happy. After a time, when, it is an old story—this being married—it is different.

Black Wolf never went to the rock again, and even stayed at home from the hut, so he could lie in the lodge, and smoke, and watch Ano-et-ka's nimble fingers as they deftly flew back and forth over her beadwork. He liked to help her sometimes, too, when he thought nobody saw him. But they did see him, and soon it came to be told that Black Wolf was becoming an old woman, and worked like a squaw. And they made fun of him—behind his back at first, then openly to his face; at least, the squaws did. There was something in the Wolf's eagle eye and close mouth which prevented any of the men but the chiefs and old warriors and his friend Ochilla from deriding him.

But Black Wolf did not seem to mind. He stayed in his lodge as much as he could, and only went to the big fall hunt because he feared to incur the sneers of his fellow-warriors.

Among the Sioux, he who gives way to this soft kind of love is said to be weak in the head. So, after a while, the old men and chiefs talked about putting the Wolf out of the Council in which he had been the most prominent of the younger men.

Ano-et-ka heard of this, and was ashamed. She was

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not afraid of the Wolf, for he had been too good to her, and she was spoilt. When, therefore, the Wolf lay watching her next day, she looked up and scowled, and called him a puppy, and an old woman, and a toad, and asked him if he thought he would ever be a man. Then Black Wolf, grieved, rose, and walked sadly down to the rock, where he stayed till the owls and bats came around. His heart was very sore, for he was sure now that his wife did not love him.

Ochilla, about dusk, went over to Black Wolf's lodge, and, being curtly informed by Ano-et-ka that she knew nothing of her lord's whereabouts, he hurried down to the river and found his friend.

Black Wolf opened his heart to the other and told him all his troubles, Ochilla asking questions and giving advice as though to a son. He had doubts as to the fair Ano-et-ka's fealty to her husband—he had heard her, at several dances loudly praise Sa-han-te, but this was nothing, for every Sioux woman may praise whom she will in the dance. There were other things, also, which gave him suspicion, but he deemed it unwise to tell his friend of them at present. He hoped the Wolf would now become more like other men, and subjugate Ano-et-ka as he, Ochilla, had subjugated two wives. So, when Black Wolf, almost weeping, had finished speaking, he only said quietly. "Why has not my brother given the woman the whip?"

Black Wolf's blood seemed to rush to his heart.

"What! Strike Ano-et-ka? Whip her—my wife?" he exclaimed.

"Why not? Women are strange creatures, and must be ruled. That is my way, and look at my women."

The Wolf did not answer.

He knew Ochilla's wives—thin, tired, bent creatures, worn with work.

He turned away and went back to the camp.

Thenceforth the Wolf was more like his old self, except that he hunted and raced horses as much as other men, and spent little time in dreaming. To Ano-et-ka he was kind but nothing more. He paid no more attention to her than to the slave women who did their cooking.

Their child, a boy, was born, but he merely smiled when it was shown him, and said no word to her. He had begun to have the same uneasy feeling that other men do when their wives are made love to. For among the Sioux, a man may make love to married women, and to him her lawful husband can mete no punishment, even if he choose to kill the woman.

Sa-han-te, Ano-et-ka's former lover, now owner of two wives, did not attempt to conceal his efforts to induce Ano-et-ka to become his third. Indeed, it was, when the next fall hunt came round, common talk in the village.

The day before the hunters were to start, Sa-han-te somehow dropped his knife and hurt his foot badly. It was a curious wound, which looked as if it had been purposely made, but, as Sa-han-te said it was done by accident, there was nothing for others to say, though all knew he would now be obliged to remain at home with the women and old men. Though Black Wolf had been grieving over that warrior's attention to his wife, he still had faith in her, and believed her trustworthy.

And so the brave band went after the buffalo, and did not return for many days, for they met the Pawnees and had several battles in the hills, where, their foes outnumbering them, hemmed the Sioux in and kept them away from the buffalo herds. Then, one bright morning they rode proudly into camp, whither a courier had preceded them.

All the people came out to receive the hunters, and the old medicine man came up to Black Wolf and took his hand, for the courier had told him of the Wolf's prowess, and he was glad, for the young man had taken more scalps than any of his companions, at much greater risk.

Black Wolf looked round, hoping, in the throng of women, to see the glad face of his wife, but she was not there. The people near him seemed to fear to speak to him. His heart standing still, he turned and rode down to his lodge. All was silent. He dismounted and looked about him. No one had followed him, and he lifted the flap of the tepee and looked in. All was disorder and desolation. He understood. His own sister had left her husband's lodge in the same way, while he was absent.

Someone came up behind him. Black Wolf turned and saw it was his old father. They embraced, and the old man, weeping, told his son the story.

Ano-et-ka, he said, had gone to live with Sa-han-te the very day after her husband left. She took the child also. The old men had held council and decided that Sa-han-te must leave the village to await the decision of the absent head chief. So he had taken his women and children, and horses, and pitched his lodge up the creek, past the herd ground, where he now was.

"And," said old Ta-ha-chin, "if you do not cause the chief to make this robber pay dearly, you are not my son."

Black Wolf did not answer, but leaped on his horse and dashed up the creek. He passed a woman, toiling under a heavy load of wood; it was Sa-han-te's oldest wife, and she seeing who the rider was, fell by the rail and began to wail piteously. Sa-han-te, whose hair Ano-et-ka was dressing, before the lodge, leapt to his feet and grasped his bow, but let it fall when Black Wolf raised his hand in token of friendship.

The deserted husband sprang from his horse and looked at Sa-han-te searchingly. The other returned the gaze without flinching.

"Call the woman," said Black Wolf. Ano-et-ka, who had fled into the lodge, and was cowering under a pile of skins, came out, trembling, her baby in her arms.

The Wolf reached out and took the little one, and stroking its head asked Sa-han-te: "Do you love her—the woman?"

The other nodded.

"Do you love him?"

The woman, weeping, answered: "Yes."

"Will you be good to her and the child if I leave them to you, Silver Tongue?"

Sa-han-te's voice was clear as he answered simply: "I will."

Down the village, the assembled men and women were amazed when Black Wolf, with Sa-han-te and the faithless Ano-et-ka, rode in, but the Wolf did not notice their surprise. He saw nothing. Before the head chief's lodge he halted, and, before all the tribe, joined the hands of the guilty ones. Then turned and rode toward the river.

* * * * *

Ochilla, a little later, heard the voice of a warrior chanting his death-song, over in the direction of the big rock. He ran down there with the speed of the wind, but he was too late, and from the great whirlpool nothing ever comes up.

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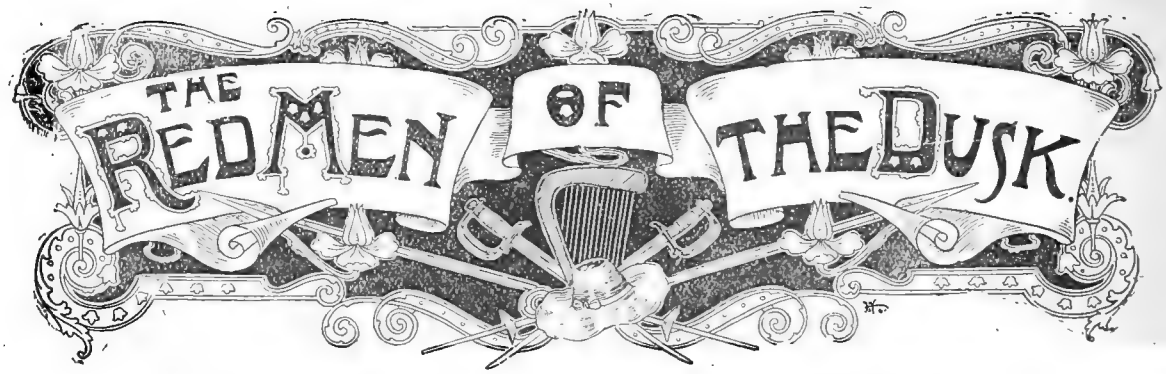


A Romance of the Seventeenth Century.

BY JOHN FINNEMORE.

CHAPTER XX.

Close Quarters.

I was just swinging myself back into the room when there was a rustling of petticoats, and in ran Siani.

"Many, many coming," she called in a loud whisper. "Go! go!"

I shook my head, and she darted to the window.

A low cry burst from her lips as she saw the watchers without. A great clatter of feet on the stairs and a hubbub of angry voices warned me of the danger which threatened from within, and I cast a glance about me. To make a stand where I was would be impossible. The passage was the only place to hold them. In a few words I explained to Siani—who understood English much better than she spoke it—what I intended to do, and she nodded.

"I keep here," she said; "no one come this way."

She had provided herself with a formidable knife, and now spat into her fist, took a firm grip of the haft, and posted herself at the window. I patted her shoulder, drew my sword, and ran for the passage. I shut the door of the room swiftly, and listened. A loud cry of surprise rang along the gallery. The attacking party had found my room empty. Then I heard an excited voice screaming up the stairs, and I knew they would be on the right scent without delay.

Luckily for me, the passage was not straight. It took a sharp turn half-way between the chamber-door and the mouth where it opened to the gallery. It was unlighted, and the closing of the door threw this end into complete darkness, while my enemies would be outlined against the light without. It was narrow, and, as I love the point better than the edge, I was the better suited.

"Come," thought I, "'tis a case of drawing a badger. The hole is snug and convenient to a degree, and if I do not give them as good as they bring, 'twill be foul shame to me." I had, as weapons, my trusty sword, a blade which had served my father before me, and is of unequalled temper, and a pair of pocket pistols with which Enid had furnished me. The pistols had each two barrels, and, of course, the balls were small. But, at a few paces a little bullet can give a great wound, and I took one in my left hand, my sword in my right, and I stood firmly in the angle of the passage. I had barely presented my pistol when a cluster of faces swarmed into the opening.

It was all dark to their eyes, they knew not where I was, and they hung for an instant at the mouth of the passage. It was to my advantage to quickly deepen this unwillingness to advance, and I steadily discharged both barrels of the pistol. The shots struck home among the crowd, and it melted away with mingled cries of pain and fury. Then two swift figures sprang into the narrow gap, one from either side, laid pikes before them and ran in, thinking to bear me down with their greater reach. This attack was mere foolishness and delivered in the blindness of rage, a passion to which the Celtic temper is prone, and which leads them very often to vain attempts, as in this case.

For the two men, being of the Mervyn faction and ignorant of the house, knew not of the bend in the passage, and dashed their pike-heads against the wall. Meeting so unyielding a substance, the pikes flew from their hands, and they themselves rolled down headlong. As they rose I cut each of them shrewdly over the head, for had they made another step forward, they would have been within grappling distance, and to be seized by one of them would have been fatal since the whole crowd would have followed up at a cry. The sting of the blade quickly let out their fury, and, without attempting to pick up their weapons, they scrambled down the passage and out of my sight, one of them groaning heartily.

I stepped back in shelter of the wall and so, when a couple of muskets were presented and discharged, the bullets flew by me harmlessly. I could see nothing of those who fired save the hands, and several volleys were poured in this fashion into my retreat. Some of the bullets glanced round the outer angle of the bend, which was a smooth curve and, traversing the whole length of the passage, struck into the door. Time and again they whizzed by me, but by keeping myself flat against the inner angle, I escaped untouched. The firing ceased, and I peered out again. Thick, eddying clouds of smoke obscured my view, and then a bright red glare struck into them as, with steady, cautious step, as fresh party of my enemies came upon me.

The move was well planned. Two men were in front ready with their weapons; behind them a tall fellow held a blazing torch on high to light them to the attack. Thus I must fight with the light in my eyes, and they in complete shadow. I knew my assailants at a glance; they were the duellist and his cousin. The duellist was a little the foremost, and he held a pistol in his left hand. This I dreaded much more than the sword in his right, and I drew my remaining pistol also. Yet I was unwilling to spend my last shots till utterly compelled, and I dropped upon one knee and uttered a low, melancholy groan. The duellist stepped out briskly upon hearing this, and I was on him before he knew how close he was to my lair.

I had marked his left arm from the beginning of my spring, and my sword was through his wrist, held out stiffly, pistol in hand, before he could crook his finger on the trigger.

The pistol rattled on the boards at my feet, and his companion fired as I leapt back. The noise in the confined space was deafening, but the bullet did no more than rip a shred from the shoulder of my coat.

With a shriek of pain, the duellist lunged fiercely at me.

I turned his sword aside, and whipped up my blade in time to guard a cut from his companion. The fellow with the torch understood his business, for he now lowered the leaping red flame until it was just above his leader's shoulders and directly level with my eyes.

The two swords springing out at me were lined with bright streaks as their polished surfaces caught the light, and them I could see plainly enough. But the eyes of my adversaries I could not see, and it is the eye which tells everything to one who knows how to read his enemy's intentions.

I fell back slowly a couple of steps, for the passage narrowed as it approached the inner door. My foes pressed on me together and eagerly, striking and shouting in triumph as I retreated. Then the lessening room warned them that they could not come on abreast, and, both eager to deal, as they expected, the finishing blow, the two of them bounded out at the same moment to take the lead.

As I had calculated, they clashed with, and jostled, each other roughly. For the instant neither would give way, and the advantage was mine if swiftly followed up. I promise you I made no laggard business of it. I had not forgotten the duellist's advice to his brother when I lay under Whitesock, and, knowing he was the more dangerous enemy, I gave him the point with my full weight behind it, running him clean through, and slashing the other severely across the shoulder of his sword arm.

Down went the first all in a heap, and the second staggered back. The big fellow with the torch bounded at me like a wolf, striking madly at me with the blazing brand. So sudden was his attack that the leaping flame was at my eyes before I could pull myself together to meet this new mode of warfare.

I raised my arm, and he struck it furiously with the great splinter of burning bog wood. The light, flaky wood shattered into a thousand fragments, covering me with sparks and flaming tinder, while I repaid him with a thrust which drove him howling back. With a few hasty sweeps of the hand I freed myself from the shreds of the torch and stood to my guard again.

It was some moments before I could see clearly, for the glare of the flame had dazzled my eyes. Where my enemies were I knew not, and I swung my sword from wall to wall, high and low before me, to be sure that all was clear in my front. As my eyes began to do their wonted service, I heard a dragging noise, and saw the torch-bearer drawing away the body of the duellist, who began to utter choking groans as he was moved.

The other man had already retreated, and though it would have been easy for me to cut off the two at hand, yet I could not find it in my heart to attack the faithful fellow, who, wounded himself, was succouring his master.

I trampled out the glowing fragments which littered the floor, drew a deep breath, and thought gratefully of the stout-hearted Siani guarding the window within. But for her my case would be hopeless. A single assailant in the rear would make a swift end of the business. The day was now wearing on and the light grew fainter in the gallery, and in consequence my narrow fortress became duskier than ever.

Five, ten minutes passed, and no fresh attempt was set on foot. I posted myself at the angle and kept a keen look-out, but saw no one. A continued mutter of voices warned me that plenty of foes were lurking near the narrow entrance to my den, but they gave no other sign of their presence.

Suddenly I jumped in sheer fright. My nerves were strained to expect but one thing, and that was a rush from the gallery, and when a loud, hollow stroke rang out at my elbow on the other side of the wall upon which I leant, I shook with surprise. Several dull-sounding blows were given, and then—clang! clang!—an iron bar rang upon stone.

I was at no loss to explain their movements, and bit my under-lip till the blood ran, as I cudgelled my perplexed brain for some way of meeting this clever plan. My enemies were within a couple of feet of me knocking a hole in the wall.

They had skilfully chosen a point which would rake the lower end of the passage. Once a gap was made, they had but to thrust the muzzle of a musket through and my flank was turned, my fortress untenable.

Luckily the partition walls in that stout old house were soundly built of quarried stone, and the clinking box had a good twenty minutes' work before it, ere the plaster on my side would be reached.

To retreat to the room behind me was useless. It was big enough to admit a score to hack at me, and I dismissed the idea instantly. I sent my thoughts out, and ran in mind over the whole house with which I had become quite familiar. The gallery, the wide stairs, the hall, the ponderous door, the hillside without, these strung themselves before my inner eye, and I wondered if a dash were possible. But I could not help shaking my head as I counted the risks. Of a sudden, my thoughts, as it seemed of their own will, turned and ran upstairs. I saw the flights of broad, shallow steps, the long corridor on the next floor, with its rows of doors opening to the garrets, where slept servants and retainers; a clumsy ladder leading to a trap-door which gave entrance to a chamber in the roof, and I caught my breath at the idea which flashed into my mind.

"An impregnable fortress," thought I, "could I but reach it!—an impregnable fortress. They dare do nothing but starve me out of it, and much might happen before then."

I felt a burning eagerness to try my fate at once. I slipped out of my boots, tied my sword to my wrist by a kerchief for fear it should be struck from my hand, took a tight grip of my loaded pistol and made a cautious step or two down the outer end of the passage. Inch by inch I drew on until I was but a yard from the mouth, and I felt sure that none of the guard was very close to the opening. Then, like a hare from her form, I darted out at full speed.

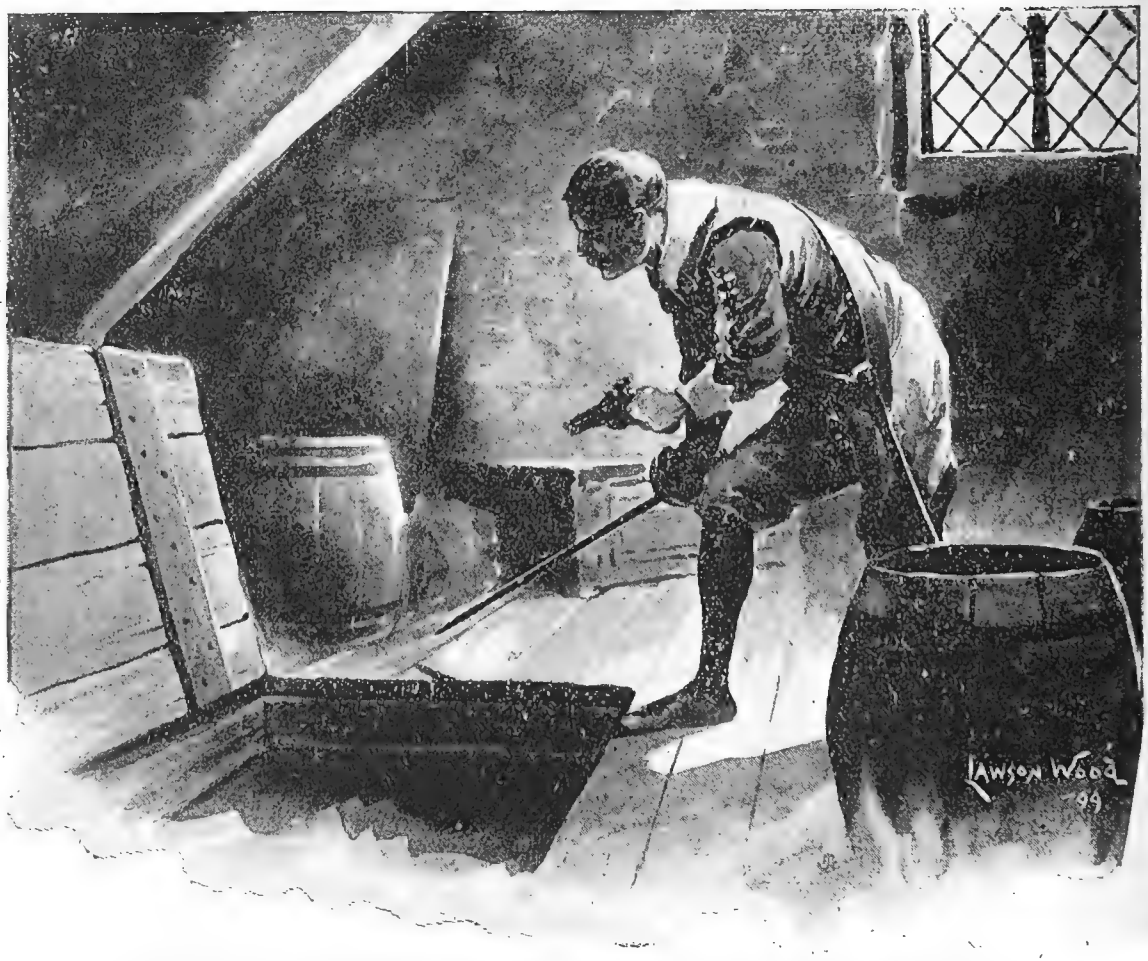
A great roar of surprise went up and a dozen men sprang at me at once. Two or three pistols were fired at random, but the balls went wide of me, and I passed clear through the crowd to the further side of the gallery. Every one of the band stationed here was at once filled with the same idea.

They never dreamt but that I was rushing for the stairs and the hall, and they swung in a yelling wave to the stair-head to cut me off. This played my game to a nicety, and left fully open the flight on the opposite side leading to the next floor. Up I went, three steps at a bound, followed by a second cry of surprise at seeing me, as they thought, plunge deeper into the trap. Then there was a thunderous pounding of heavy boots as they charged after me. But my start was too good, and when the first face appeared at the head of the stairs I was already lifting the trap.

I flung it back, bounded in, hurled the unfastened ladder down with a crash to the boards below, and roared triumphantly:

"Now, I am your master. Lay but a figner on that ladder to follow me and I will blow you and the house to fragments."

No one, perhaps, understood my words, but all belonging to Nant-y-Bryn knew very well where I was, and what I meant. The news swiftly spread to the strangers and



"Lay but a finger on that ladder to follow me, and I will blow you and the house to fragments."

there was an instant flight. The terrific clatter descended and descended, and before long the upper part of the house was as silent as the grave. I stood in the loft where the powder was stored, and within a couple of feet of my pistol muzzle was a lidless cask three parts filled with the coarse, black grains.

CHAPTER XXI.

In the Powder-Loft.

I thrust my pistol back into my pocket and looked about me at my ease. A desperate man and a couple of hundredweights of powder would be allowed a wide birth, so much was clear, and I need fear no interference for the present. I had been in the loft several times before with Owain, but, coming merely to fetch powder and down again at once, I had given no particular attention to the place.

I must now take a more careful survey of it lest some other door should lead into it, and I be taken by surprise. I let the trap down into its place and dragged upon it a great piece of lead stored there for bullet moulding. No one could lift it now without giving me warning, and I began to move about the room scanning every corner eagerly. The loft was built in the very ridge of the roof, was about sixteen feet wide, and ran the whole length of the house. It was possible to stand up only in the middle, the slant of the roof forbidding such a position elsewhere.

There was a window in each end, the western one, close to me, bright with the evening light, the eastern one looking far and dim. I made haste to traverse the long, wedge-shaped place while the light lasted. It was empty of all save the ammunition stored at the western end, that was certain, but the huge, massy beams of the roof made the eastern half so dusky that it was impossible to search for trap-doors or other openings. I returned to the better lighted part and knelt down at the window, which was near the floor. Almost the first thing I saw was Whitesock. She stood upon the hillside two hundred yards from the house, her head and tail up, and an air of curiosity and wonder distinct in every turn of her attitude.

Next I saw three men creeping to surround her. They posted themselves in a circle and moved gently upon her. She remained perfectly quiet till they were within a dozen yards, her nose up, snuffing the air impatiently, and marvelling, doubtless, where I could be, then she turned and was off like lightning. Up the hill she went, bound upon bound, her pursuers straining in the rear. She ran some distance, then paused to look back. A tiny, squat figure shot into sight on top of a boulder beside the mare, and made a flying leap at her.

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It lighted on its stomach, dropping on the saddle at right angles to her back. I saw the arms spread and the heels stuck stiffly out to gain a balance, and then the shock-headed dwarf harper, for I had recognised him, pivoted himself about, dropped his short legs, stuck his feet into the stirrup leathers, and waved his hand to the three runners.

It would have been more to his purpose had he taken a handful of mane to hold on by, for Whitesock clapped her head between her forelegs and shot her heels high into the air. The harper, without a doubt, had a safe seat on a mountain pony not much bigger than a rat, but this was a notch beyond his powers, for away he went whirling through the air, and bringing up, head first, on the grass.

His neck, however, was surely destined to be broken by other means since he was up in a moment. Whitesock trotted on as soon as she was rid of him, and passed him just as he rose. He ran after her. Forty yards further she disappeared over a rise, the harper vanished at her tail in full pursuit, and, a minute later, the three men went after the harper.

All this, taking place to the west of me, in the afterglow of a clear, brilliant sky, was in full sight, and I watched eagerly for the next move. I could not see into the valley beyond the rise, but I commanded the further slope entirely, and before long I saw Whitesock canter up it alone, stand for a few moments, then strike away southward and begin to circle back towards the house where she knew very well that I was.

Minute after minute passed and there was no sign of the harper or the three men who had pursued from Nant-y-Bryn. No one ran after the mare, no one came back. I whistled softly between my teeth as the idea dawned upon me that the three men never would come back. The harper was not there alone, and the unlucky fellows had run into an ambush.

A slight scraping on the floor below fetched me from the window to the trap at a bound. Someone was trying to lift the ladder into place.

"Who is there?" I challenged.

"Well, it is me," said a familiar voice.

I swung away the lead and flung up the trap-door.

"Siani," said I, "is your mistress safe?"

"Yes, she is," said Siani.

"And you?" I continued. "How did you come off?"

"I am all right," answered Siani.

"Did anyone try to get up through the window?"

"One," said Siani with a grin. "He was a stranger, so I let him come up half and then cut the stuff. He tumble very hard."

"Siani," said I "you are a girl of a thousand, and I am very grateful to you. Is there any way of getting into the loft except by the trap-door here?"

"None at all," said Siani. "I go now to Miss Enid. Here are the boots."

I saw for the first time that she had brought the boots I had left behind in my flight. I thanked her, and asked her to leave them where she stood. I had no need of them in the loft, and it would be quieter work to scramble up and down, if need should be, without them. She went away, and I sat down at the edge of the trap, my feet dangling, my eyes fixed on the stair corner where danger must first show itself, and my thoughts busy on the situation. After a while I remembered my empty pistol. A bag of large swan-shot stood close at hand, and I loaded it from that. Then I swung myself over the side of the opening and dropped lightly to the floor below. I advanced stealthily to the head of the stairs and peered down. The house lay as silent in the gathering dusk as if I were the only living soul in it.

The silence was portentous, and inspired me with caution, not confidence. I slipped back, and gently lifted the ladder into place that my way of retreat might be clear, then returned to the stair head. It grew darker and darker, and I ventured a few steps down to a point where I could catch a glimpse of the hall. No sign of light, or sound, or movement. I felt certain there was a trap laid for me if I went further, so I returned. My foot touched something as I crept up again. I put my hand down and found that a carbine had been flung away on the stairs by one of the flying band.

I picked it up and carried it back with me. Upon trial I found it was loaded, and I propped it handy against the stair rail and resumed my watch.

The night had now fallen as dark as it would be, yet of black darkness there was none, for the sky was frosty clear and filled with twinkling stars, burning their brightest, and sending through the narrow casements a faint, grey shimmer. My eyes, too, were thoroughly at home in the pale light, for I had known no other since the night fell, and when a silent, creeping figure came slowly up the stairs from the hall I saw it. Another and another followed, until a cluster of five men stood in the gallery.

It is very likely that they had come from a lighted room in a part of the house out of my sight, and so believed themselves surrounded by an impenetrable darkness. The while they gathered a distant sound came to my ears. It was a long, shrill, faint scream, accompanied by a hollow rapping. There was a note of warning in the sounds. Luckily, I had no need of it, for my eye was fixed upon the group below.

My assailants stood several moments, groping among one another, to be sure that they had gathered together, and I think that the silence and the gloom fingered at their hearts even more surely than they identified each other by sense of touch.

I had laid my hand on the carbine, thinking to follow the shot with pistol and sword, but I drew back. The five stepped noiselessly forward, and I saw that the leader bore some long object. I made two bounds up the ladder to the loft, took a double handful of swan-shot, and returned. They were half way up to me when I got back, but moving very slowly and cautiously. Primed, as I found out afterwards, by promises and drink, they had started out gaily enough, and now the darkness and the strain of their secret advance were telling. One of them breathed out a long, quavering sigh, and two or three others caught their breath in sympathy. I leant forward and tossed the two handfuls of shot plump upon the black patch crawling up. An attack was never more simply and surely repulsed. The rain of tinkling, pattering, rolling shot fetched out an instant cry, sharp, short shrieks of nervous terror.

A heavy body was dropped upon the stairs, and the five men bounded down, screaming as they ran. I had felt perfectly certain that their quivering nerves needed but a prick to jar every man out of tune, for I had learnt to know them a little, and I laughed aloud as they ran. At once, as if a signal had been given, the policy of silence was thrown up. Lights flashed and voices sounded in the hall below, threats, couched in very shaky English, were hurled up at me, and shots fired, the bullets burying themselves harmlessly in wall or ceiling. On the last flight of steps lay a light ladder. It had been carried by the leader of the storming party to spare them lifting into place, as they expected, the clumsy one I had flung down, and had been thrown aside in the flight.

As for me, I waited contentedly in my fortress, feeling perfectly certain that the coming night was to see some strange things, and only longing to get some glimpse of my dear mistress, and be sure that she was safe amid this turmoil. Within five minutes this wish was gratified. I saw her sweep swiftly into sight, turn along the gallery, and disappear. She went in the direction of Owain's room, and I knew that she was going to watch by him. She bore herself with a proud lift of the head, an air of wounded dignity, which set my nostrils quivering with the idea that someone had offended her, or offered her insult.

She was, after an interval, followed by Siani, and the latter was undisguisedly in a rage, shaking her fist and spluttering gutterals which sounded like threats at someone below.

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CHAPTER XXII.

The Tables Turned.

With the failure of the attempt to take me off my guard, the ordinary life of the house was, in the main, resumed, and, as I sat up aloft in the darkness, women came and went on errands, twice or thrice men appeared in the gallery, and, save that no one seemed inclined to come my way, the place assumed its usual aspect after dark and the lighting of the lamps.

Of noise there was plenty, and to spare. Uproarious voices disputed, quarrelled, shouted each other down, and made a riot in the lower regions. Now and again a snatch of a drunken song was bellowed out, and it was plain that my uncle's strong ale was flowing freely. Of him I had seen never a sign since he came up to the spot where the duel was fought, and though, nominally, there was no dispute between us, yet I felt sure that he saw where matters stood, and why I was haunting Nant-y-Bryn. Half-an-hour passed, and then I heard a couple of fellows talking thickly together on the lower stairs, and the sound of unsteady feet pounding up.

In a moment two men came in sight. Both wore bloody bandages about their heads, and were, I believe, the pike-men who had charged the wall in the passage, and whose crowns I had slashed there. Upon reaching the gallery they came to a pause and looked earnestly up to the dark-ness which hid me. One shook a fist in my direction, then tapped his comrade on the breast in drunken gravity, and held earnest conversation with him.

As this passed in their own tongue I knew not its purport, but the other fellow, too tipsy to stand upright without support, leant against the oaken gallery rail and nodded his head sagely to every observation. It looked as if they were coming in pot-valiant mood to beat up my quarters and avenge their sliced polls. Their weapons testified to the state of their wits. The one who was haranguing carried a short sword, the other held a heavy stick in his left hand and a great leathern jack in his right.

Presently the jack went up to his lips, back went his head, and he took a hearty draught. Then he handed the vessel to his companion with an emphatic nod, and shook his stick at me in turn. While the man with the sword drank, the fellow with the club, preserving an immovable solemnity of face, began to strike thunderous blows upon the stout rail and to bellow a resounding stave. Almost with the first words of his song, Siani rushed up to him and began to speak excitedly.

He took not the least notice of her, and, in another moment, Enid stood before him, pointing downstairs, and commanding him to leave the gallery. With a cry of drunken fury he turned short upon her and aimed a blow with his fist. Siani was between them like lightning and received the blow upon her shoulder. The force was such, however, as to hurl her violently against her mistress, and both went headlong to the floor, Enid striking her head against one of the heavy, clumsy chairs with which the gallery was furnished. Choking with rage, I darted down the stairs, and flew upon the ruffian now swinging up his club to strike at the prostrate and defenceless women.

The carbine was in my hand, but at such close quarters I dared not use shot. I reversed it as I ran, gripped the barrel in my right hand a few inches below the trigger, and dashed the stock into the face of my foe.

The crashing blow took him squarely across the jaw and cheek, and down he went, the blood spouting from nose, and mouth, and ears. I turned upon the second fellow, who was just raising his sword in slow, tipsy fashion. Him I struck a butting blow which took him in the chest and sent him spinning down stair after stair till he reached the flags of the hall. Turning, I found Siani already on her feet, and half lifting her mistress.

I flung away the carbine, sprang forward, took the dear burden from her, and hurried to my lair as a shouting, curious crowd ran on us from below. I made two steps along the upper gallery, laid Enid down in the shelter of the wall, and jumped back to hold the stair head. Siani had followed at my heels, and ran to her mistress.

A noisy mob was gathered in the gallery about the fallen man, several reeling on their feet, all shouting one thing or another at the top of their voices, wrangling, yelling, shaking fists towards the darkness that hid me, full of the rage of drink, yet none daring to set foot towards my hold. My anger was such that I would have slain the whole batch of rogues at a blow had it lain in my power. I poured into the crowd every shot I could muster, the swan-shot and the bullets from the second pistol.

They howled in affright at this second shower of lead, and ran to cover, two or three groaning dismally as if the bullets had found their billet, a thing likely enough at so short a range, and the place was clear again.

"How is she, Siani?" I whispered anxiously.

"She is quite well," answered the sweetest voice in the world. "I was only giddy for the moment. Have they hurt you at all?"

"Not a scratch," said I. "I have had the most wonderful fortune."

"And your head?" she asked.

"It smarts a little," I replied, "nothing more."

"Was not an attempt made a while back to do some-thing?" asked Enid.

I laughed, and told the story of the two handfuls of swan-shot.

"I was sure of it," she said. "I was in the kitchen giving some orders to the women there, and Siani was with me, when the door was suddenly slammed and held against us. I felt sure it was to prevent any warning being given to you of some plan, but Siani screamed as loudly as she could and took off her shoe and beat the door with the heel."

"I heard it plainly," I replied—"plainly. There was a distinct sound of warning in it, too, though I had already seen them and was prepared."

"I think it was that," went on Enid, "which made the strangers angry with us."

"And it is all my fault," said I.

"Oh, no, no," she cried. "It is I who should beg your forgiveness for leading you into all this."

"And pray," said I, "what would my case be at this moment if you had not exerted your influence to save me? Had you left me on the hillside I should have been shot or stabbed within a minute of your back being turned. Whitesock could not fend off bullets, and I had been an instant target but for your goodness to me."

She drew a long breath and there was silence for a few moments. She stood up and stepped forward.

"Surely," said I, "you do not think of going down again?"

"I ought to be——" she began, then stopped.

"Very good," I returned, "if you wish it. I will come with you and see that you are unmolested as far as I can compass it."

"Oh, no," she said hurriedly, "oh, no, no! You must not do so; you must not leave this secure post."

"And I am to sit here then in comparative security and picture you somewhere below exposed to the insults of drunken ruffians?"

"You could escape," said she. "I am sure you could escape. There is no watch posted about the house; all are indoors engaged too much in their drink and quarrelling to give any attention to what goes on without."

"Ay," I returned, "escape easily enough at present, I believe. It would be simple to slip down from a window and whistle to Whitesock, who, thanks again to you, is wandering somewhere at hand on the hillside."

"And you will?" she whispered eagerly.

"And I will not," I whispered back. "What, jog all over the hills and leave you here, uncertain what may happen, you whom I love, oh, so dearly!"

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Siani had vanished somewhere, and I put my arm about Enid and drew her closely to me and laid my cheek against the soft velvet of hers.

"No, no," I went on; "from this time your fortune is my fortune. I am all alone in the world, and you——"

I paused, vexed at my stupidity in bringing up such thoughts, and ten times more so when I felt warm tears roll from her cheek to mine.

"Forgive my clumsy tongue," I whispered. "I only meant that we must be all in all to each other. Escape is the word, truly enough, but we shall go together, and ride away across the hills and get married. Do you agree?"

She pressed her cheek a little tighter for answer, and my heart leapt up as lightly as though danger and death were far away instead of all around. Soft footsteps were heard gliding towards us, and Enid drew a little away from me. It was Siani returning from her own room, which was on this floor, and bearing with her a warm cloak, in which she wrapped her mistress.

"Well done, Siani," said I, for the night was growing very cold. "Now," I went on, "could you find me another roll of linen stuff like that one I had?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Siani; "the room to keep them is up here." And away she went again.

"Then you will go to-night," said my love, laying her hand upon my arm. "Oh, do go, and I will only wait till after——"

"Dearest," said I, "I will press you to nothing. If the place quiets, and these rascals from a distance are got rid of, I believe you would be safe here once more, and I will go my ways and come again for you before long. But, as matters are, I will not budge an inch from your side."

"And yet you sent Siani for the cloth?" she said.

"Yes," I returned, "for I will make preparations to fit any case. And there are several possible turns to to-night's work."

Siani came back with the roll, dropped it at my feet, shot down the stairs, fell on hands and knees at the foot, and glided along the gallery like a snake.

Minute after minute passed, and at last Siani crept into sight again in the fashion she had departed, but now laden like a packhorse. She dragged after her a pair of great, bulging saddle-bags, and a dark-red riding dress, held in her teeth, trailed after her. I slipped down the stairs, relieved her of the saddle-bags, and ran back. She came closely after me, the dress flung over her arm.

"Why, Siani," said I, "you read my very thoughts."

The keen-witted girl was doing exactly what I had wished for, yet scarce known how to set on foot. She had come to the conclusion her mistress would not be left behind, and here she was getting things to hand.

Suddenly the keen tinkle and clash of steel against steel rose to my ears. I ran down a few steps and peeped into the hall below. The ill-feeling and drunken fury had run to blows, and a couple of men were hard at it in ding-dong fashion, hacking and hewing at each other furiously, while their companions were drawn up in bands on either side of the place yelling encouragement to the combatants. Within a dozen blows the duel was decided. The Nant-y-Bryn man failed to parry a savage cut at the head and went down all in a heap with his skull split across.

This was the signal for a general combat. Three or four friends of the fallen man sprang in and struck at the victor, whose companions were no less ready to save him than the others were anxious for revenge, and, upon the instant, a mad hurly-burly of battle raged within the hall. I glanced upwards. Enid had disappeared, and I turned my eyes again upon the turmoil below. Swords rose and fell, pistols cracked, shouts and yells rang out, and a reek of thick vapour gathered over them.

"There wants but one thing now," thought I. "Where are the 'Red Men of the Dusk'?"

(To be continued.)

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PADRE MATEO VERDUGO was the venerable priest in charge of an Indian mission near the coast of California. The mission is now a majestic ruin; but sixty years ago Padre Mateo was a busy man.

One morning, while the sacristan slept, Padre Mateo sat outside his door with a big book on his knees.

The padre had almost fallen asleep, when, hearing the patter of bare feet, he looked up to see dark-skinned boys carrying a litter of kittens towards the creek.

"*Qué!* *Qué!*" cried the padre, rubbing his eyes. "Would you destroy the poor kittens?"

"*Si*, padre," replied one little Indian.

"*Para qué?*" questioned the priest.

"They are too many, padre," answered the little Indian, poking his great toe in the dust.

"But wait. The pretty things! They have not yet beheld the light of day. Give them to me," cried the benignant priest. "They shall not perish, for I will care for them myself. Are they not pretty, my worthy Guadaloupe? Open thine eyes for one instant."

Had the sacristan forseen the consequences, he would have made remonstrance before the padre's passion strengthened; but, being sleepy and selfish, Guadaloupe settled himself for another nap. At the end of the second year Padre Mateo's cats were the bane of the sacristan's life.

"Must I," thought he, with rising spleen, "I, who am seventy years old and have a stitch in my back; must I, besides dusting the altar and ringing four heavy bells and 'tending the padre's house, must I do obedience to yowling cats? *Es vergonzoso*, indeed!"

Had he not feared the padre's malediction he would have murdered the creatures without compunction. The cats flourished, and the padre's fondness increased, and Guadaloupe was scolded more frequently than ever. "Heart of stone!" the priest would exclaim, "would you let them starve? I am sure you gave no milk to Carmina's new kittens this day? and well you know she has not nourishment enough for them all. You shall do penance for your iniquities."

"But, your excellency," the sacristan would remonstrate with great humility, "I had no milk left after supplying the sick babe of the squaw who died last week. Surely the kittens can wait."

"Wait?" stormed the padre. "Are they not wailing from hunger even now? Their cries pierce my heart. How can I leave them to your charge, and go away for eight long days—and go I must!"

At these words hope sprang up anew in Guadaloupe's perfidious heart.

"Art thou going away, reverend padre?" he asked meekly. "Am I, indeed, to be left alone for eight days?"

"It is true," replied the priest sadly. "I must go. I am summoned to report to my superior at San Luis Rey; and the journey will require eight days. But how can I go? The Indians can get along well enough, but what, I ask you, heart of wood, will become of my cats?"

Next day, as Padre Mateo trudged slowly down the road, a sardonic smile came upon the countenance of the wicked sacristan.

It was nearing mid-day. Already Ignatius, the oldest and leanest and hungriest of the cats, had appeared, sniffing, to learn if dinner was being cooked.

"I will teach thee—villain," muttered the sacristan fiercely, as he busied himself building a fire. "I will teach thee to sit and glower at me while I work till my body shakes with weariness."

When the meal was ready Guadaloupe went to the door.

"Come, Carlotta, dearest! Come, Pedro! Come, Carlos!" he called tenderly. "Hasten within, for thy dinner waits! Be quick, then, all of you!"

When the cats were seated, Guadaloupe, after tightly closing the doors, hurried to the chapel. From the altar he selected the largest crucifix, and, bearing this in the left hand, and a great whip behind him in his right hand, he returned to the padre's house.

Holding the crucifix before him, the sacristan entered the room where the cats were assembled. "Now, wretches! brutes! villains!" he shouted—and at each word came a cut from the whip—"fiends! monsters! ungrateful beasts. Receive your punishment!"

The astonished creatures leapt from their seats and tore madly about the little room, but they could not get beyond the reach of Guadaloupe's whip. He lashed right and left, still holding the crucifix before him, till at last he could no longer wield the whip.

Thrice each day a similar scene was enacted, till at the sight of the crucifix the creatures would spring wildly from their seats and seek to escape.

Padre Mateo returned at night, and was welcomed cordially by the perfidious sacristan. In the morning Guadaloupe called the padre to the breakfast meal.

"But—where are the cats?" asked Padre Mateo.

Guadaloupe shrugged his shoulders, with a look of sadness:

"Speak not of them, reverend father!"

"But I want my cats."

"Your excellency—I fear you have been befooled."

"Where are my cats?"

"Well, then, I will call them, venerable padre, but first let me speak. I fear the creatures are not mere common cats, else why did they conduct themselves so strangely in your absence?"

"Nonsense!" roared the padre. "Call my cats!"

"But wait, your reverence. As your reverence knows, it is my duty always, on a Thursday, to clean the candlesticks and the sacred crucifixes on the altar. Your reverence well remembers that it is my custom always to bring them outside into the air that the dust may not soil the altar cloth. What will your reverence think when I reveal the wickedness of your reverence's cats? They are all devils, surely, else why should they run from the crucifix, as the evil one would flee?"

"Nonsense!" roared the padre. "Call my cats!"

So the sacristan did as he was bid.

"Now," said Padre Mateo triumphantly, when all the cats were seated about the table, "we will test this thing! Bring in the crucifix."

Without a word the wicked sacristan flew to the chapel, and returned holding the sacred emblem aloft before him. At its appearence the unhappy cats gave a discordant howl of despair, and fled.

As the last swollen tail disappeared the padre gave a gasp and caught the sacristan's arm for support.

"Devils!" he wailed at last, wringing his trembling hands. "Things of evil! Alas! alas! How ye have deceived me! My worthy Guadaloupe, thou hast spoken truly—but—oh! how I have loved them!

"Get thy gun, my Guadaloupe. They are fiends! Get thy gun and rend their wicked hearts!" F. G. H.

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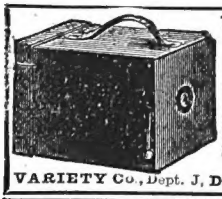

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LAST WRITTEN, FIRST READ.

ASCERTAIN at once if the FRESH AIR FUND inset is in this copy of SHORT STORIES. It should be. I hope that you will not throw it away, but will send it to us, well filled.

SUNNY.—According to the lists prepared by registrars of mean annual sunshine, Pembroke occupies the enviable position of being the sunniest spot in all England. It is, however, closely followed in this respect by Falmouth, Hastings, Eastbourne, Plymouth, and Blackpool, in the order given. The dullest spots in Britain appear to be Glasgow, London, and Glencarron, in the order given.

C. O. L.—It is a curious fact that in railway collisions nearly all the passengers who are asleep escape the bad effects of shaking and concussion, Nature's own anæsthetic preserving them.

SALL.—Only one man in every fifty in the British Army are over six feet in height.

E. G.—The total length of the streets, avenues, boulevards, bridges, quays, and thoroughfares of Paris generally is set down at about 800 miles, of which nearly 300 are planted with trees.

V.—The privilege of driving to the Vatican with a one-horse vehicle was granted to the Prussian Ambassador accredited to the Holy See owing to a curious circumstance. A Prussian ambassador some years ago drove up one day in a single-horse carriage and presented himself for admission at the gates of the Vatican leading into the court-yard; but, in pursuance of their orders, he was refused admission, except on foot, by the Swiss guard. Being forced to yield, he complained with some bitterness to Cardinal Antonelli, Secretary of State to Pius IX., who said he would refer the matter to his Holiness. Pius IX., upon hearing of the incident, immediately gave orders that henceforth his Excellency the Prussian Ambassador was to be allowed admittance however he came.

ALF.—Westminster Hall is the largest room in England unsupported by pillars.

FARE.—Women need, on the average, about nine-tenths the nourishment requisite for men.

T. L.—More than one-half of the weight of tea-leaves consists of woody fibre, a substance insoluble in water, and, therefore, incapable of yielding a particle of nutriment. The black teas appear to contain more of this fibre than the green.

LINGO.—The number of languages spoken in the known world is 2,523, of which 587 belong to Europe, 396 to Asia, 376 to Africa, and 1,164 to America.

W. C. C. gives the following interesting instance of the workings of conscience: "My wife placed several flower-pots on the dining-room window-sill, and found one morning that a pair were gone. This was in 1882, and six years afterwards they were returned by railway, packed very carefully, with the following note: 'Dear madam,—Several years ago I took from your window-sill the flower-pots I now return. Since that time my heart has changed, and I now feel it my duty to send you back the pots, with an expression of true sorrow for having ever taken them.'"

MORT.—In India the mean duration of life is only twenty-three years. In England it is forty-one years.

H. V.—The value of a half-crown, reckoned simply as silver and not as a coin, is subject to fluctuation. As a coin it can be produced in our mint at a cost of two shillings, 192 pence per pound sterling. The profit of minting is, therefore, four shillings on each pound in half-crowns, or 20 per cent. These profits of the mint only arise from the coinage of silver and copper, gold being coined free.

B. E.—The largest and oldest chain bridge in the world is said to be that of Kingtung, in China, where it forms a perfect road from the top of one mountain to another.

Q. U. is curious about the Queen's bedroom in Buckingham Palace, as he has heard that she has given orders that nobody should ever be permitted to view it.———Curiosity could not have been centred round a more unpretentious apartment. The bedstead and furniture are of the simplest description, but the room is crowded with pictures and photos of the Prince Consort. It is a veritable treasure-house of mementoes of Her Majesty's late husband. For the same reason, nobody is allowed to view the dressing-room adjoining it.

ANT.—The Indians of South America eat white ants, which they catch by pushing into the nest a grass stalk, which the ants seize and hold on to most tenaciously.

LEATHER.—The most costly leather in the world is known to the trade as piano leather. The secret of tanning piano leather is known only to a family of tanners in Thuringia, Germany. The leather has but one use—the covering of piano-keys. A peculiar thing about it is that the skins from which it is tanned are procured almost entirely in America. It is a peculiar kind of buckskin.

LOCO.—The cough or puff of a railway engine is due to the abrupt emission of waste steam up the chimney. When moving slowly the coughs can, of course, be heard following each other quite distinctly, but when speed is put on the puffs come out one after the other much more rapidly, and when eighteen coughs a second are produced they cannot be separately distinguished by the ear. A locomotive running at the rate of nearly seventy miles an hour gives out twenty puffs of steam every second—that is, ten for each of its two cylinders.

POP.—Over one-tenth of the people of the United States are negroes or Chinese.

KIN.—The estate of a person dying without next of kin, and not leaving a will, becomes the property of the Crown. In this way Her Majesty's Exchequer came into the possession, in 1876, of £140,000, left by a Miss Blake; in 1886, of £100,000, left by a Mr. Bird; and in 1887, of £200,000, left by a Mr. Heathcote.

C. R. O.—The crown is now used only for coronations and at the openings of Parliament. It is kept in the Tower.

SILK.—A fibre of silk one mile long weighs but twelve grains.

C. D.—The sea cucumber, one of the curious jelly bodies that inhabit the ocean, can practically efface himself when in danger by squeezing the water out of his body, and forcing himself into a narrow crack—so narrow as not to be visible to the naked eye. He can throw out nearly the whole of his inside, and yet live and grow it again.

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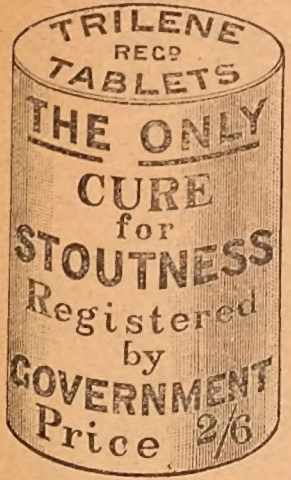

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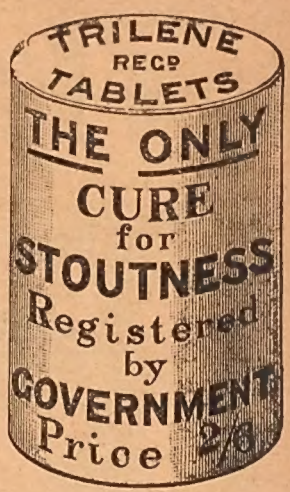

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"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lib. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silvercleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Rischolme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

MRS. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

MR. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

MRS E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round wrist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess G. FURSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

MRS. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr, Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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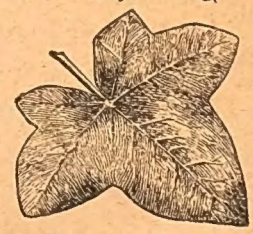

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